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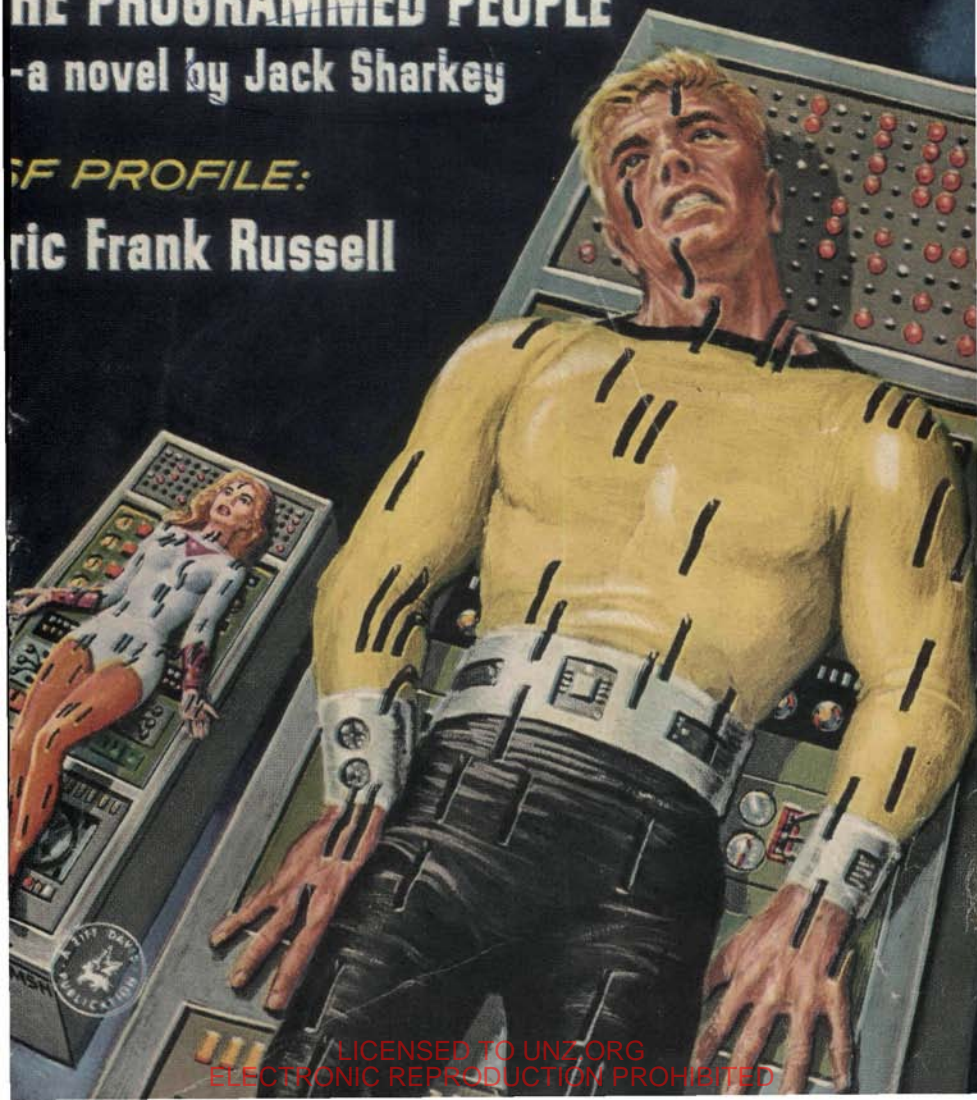


THE PROGRAMMED PEOPLE

-a novel by Jack Sharkey

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AMAZING STORIES, Fact and Science Fiction, Vol. 37, No. 6, June 1963, is published monthly by Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, at 434 South Wabash Avenue, Chicago 5, Illinois. Subscription rates: One year United States and possessions \$4.00; Canada and Pan American Union Countries \$4.50; all other foreign countries \$5.00. Second Class postage paid at Chicago, Illinois and at additional mailing offices.

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SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE: All subscription correspondence should be addressed to AMAZING STORIES, Circulation Department, 434 South Wabash Avenue, Chicago 5, Illinois. Please allow at least six weeks for change of address. Include your old address, as well as new—enclosing if possible an address label from a recent issue.

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS must be accompanied by return postage and will be handled with reasonable care; however publisher assumes no responsibility for return or safety of art work, photographs or manuscripts.

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Ziff-Davis Publishing Company

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New York 16, New York

ORegon 9-7200

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Midwestern and Circulation Office

434 South Wabash Avenue

Chicago 5, Illinois

WABash 2-4911

Western Office

9025 Wilshire Boulevard

Beverly Hills, California

CRestview 4-0265



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EDITORIAL

A SHORT while from now a new book by a Soviet astronomer will be making news. One reason is that the astronomer, Iosif Samuilovich Shklovsky, is a brilliant scientist famous for his highly credible theory that cosmic rays originate in the explosive agonies of supernovae. The second reason is that Dr. Shklovsky is something of a maverick among astronomers. Notably, he has suggested that Phobos, one of Mars' moons, was a hollow artificial satellite.

The Russian's new book will present an equally novel and controversial theory: that the place to look for signals from intelligent life in the universe is not the comparatively close stars in our own galaxy, but the stars in the Andromeda Nebula, the great spiral galaxy that lies 1,500,000 light-years distant.

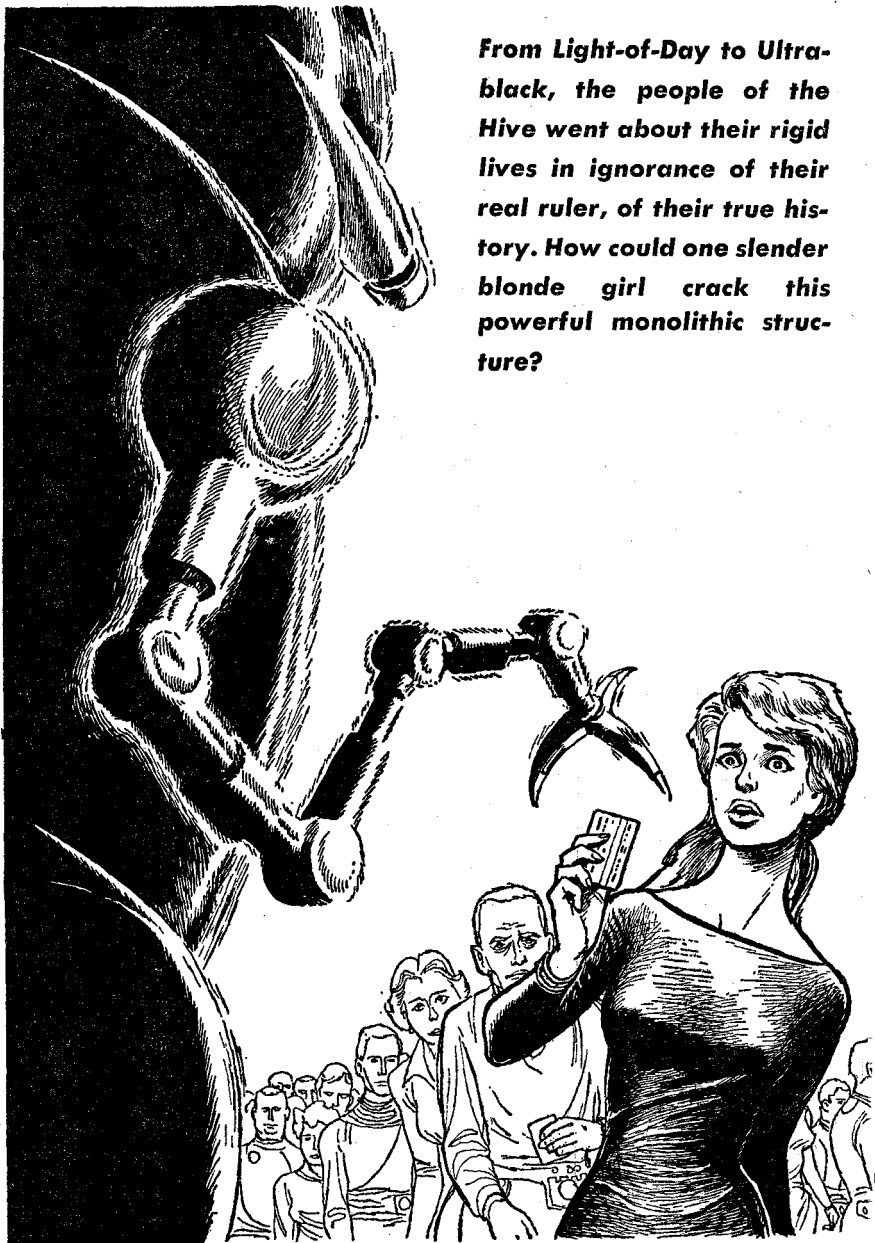
Shklovsky believes, his book will say, that a civilization sufficiently advanced to send signals into space would be able to tap as much as two per cent of the energy of its sun, and convert it into power for a radio beacon of enormous range. If, the Soviet

scientist says, we have not already detected such a powerful signal in our own galaxy, this can only mean that such a highly evolved technology is extremely rare. Perhaps only one in many tens of thousands of stars would have such an advanced planetary civilization. To attract attention to itself, then, such a civilization would realize it must put out a signal of super-immense power over tremendous distances. Thus, concludes the astronomer, it makes more sense to scan Andromeda than to scan the Milky Way.

Dr. Shklovsky, however, has made no comment so far on one matter which has some bearing on the subject. If we ever should pick up a signal—modulated or otherwise—indicating the existence of intelligence in Andromeda, it will be rather difficult to get a conversation going. A radio message, traveling at the speed of light, would still require three million earth-years to make the round-trip.

Or, as the philosopher Pascal once said: "The thought of those infinite spaces terrifies me." N.L.

From Light-of-Day to Ultra-black, the people of the Hive went about their rigid lives in ignorance of their real ruler, of their true history. How could one slender blonde girl crack this powerful monolithic structure?



THE PROGRAMMED PEOPLE

By
JACK SHARKEY

CHAPTER 1

UNDER the stark bluewhite glow that glittered from hidden niches onto the faceted undersurface of the vast vaulted crystal dome, the people milled and jockeyed for position near the dais. There was still room to move about and select a standing-site; most of the heavy thronging was still at the entrances, the wide, squat arches giving egress to the fifteen block-long arcades that radiated from the center of the temple like the spokes of a gigantic

wheel. Between the pillars that framed these arches, long unbroken walls served as firm backdrops for the Vote Boxes, twenty-five to a wall, three hundred seventy-five in all, to service a building that could hold five thousand.

Lloyd Bodger took a quick look at his wristwatch while there was still sufficient elbow-room to lift his arm. Two minutes till eight P.M. Service began promptly on the hour. He gauged his nearness to the dais with a practiced eye, then let



Illustrated by EM SH

himself be wedged into place by the increasing pressure of urgent bodies about him. It would not do to remain in the rear of the hemispherical room, where he might lose some of the Speakster's words, words that might have direct bearing upon the next Vote; nor would it do to let himself stand too near the dais, from which central point he might find himself at the tail end of the voting line, should the Proposition Screens begin to glow during the Service. A decisive Vote could be made in ten seconds, but each Kinsman was allowed thirty. The Screen would only propose the bill for five minutes before the Count. That meant that Lloyd must be at least the tenth person in a line in order to be assured his chance to nock his Voteplate in the slot. He'd missed two of his allowable three non-Votes this quarter, already. It would not do to miss another.

THE glow from the dome decreased, suddenly, as the center of the dais unfolded back into fifteen equal wedge-segments, like a blossoming flower, and the Speakster rose into view amid a solemn hush. Bright golden light made the white velvet robe shimmer like a slippery flame, and made the shadowy aspect of the cowl-hidden features all the more terrible. The golden light spilled

upward from the surfaces of the fifteen triangular "petals", bathing the Speakster thoroughly in bright radiance, leaving the remainder of the Temple in even darker darkness by contrast.

The arms of the Speakster rose slowly, angling domeward over his unseen head, until the folds of the weighty sleeves slid back a trifle at the cuff, exposing the wax-white hands, fingers spread wide apart, palms toward the beginning of the dome-curve, as though warding off impending dangers. Lloyd shivered, suddenly, despite the suffocating warmth of the crowd. This would not be a regular Service. That was the Danger-stance. Unconsciously, he held his breath, listening, as the mass tension grew unbearably electric.

"There cannot be Service tonight!" thundered the Speakster. "We are polluted from within. It would be sacrilege to have Service with a traitor in our midst!" Then, over the rising gasp that arose from the multitude, "She has been traced to this holy place, in a fiendish attempt to lose herself among the masses, to hide her rottenness amid the healthy flesh of the Kinsmen! Remain in your places—!" cried the Speakster, as a short-lived Brownian Movement began in the close-packed mob. People froze in place at the

peremptory shout. "The Goons have been alerted, and are even now converging through the arcades!" said the Speakster. A sigh of relief whispered like a concerted zephyr over the upturned faces. "She will be found out, have no fear. When I depart, and the Light-of-Day returns, you must exit through the arcade by which you entered. You will be checked by a squad of Goons on your way out. Remember, a good Kinsman has nothing to fear!"

The outstretched arms swung down until the pallid palms came firmly together before the Speakster's chest, the cowed head bowed low, and then the figure on the dais descended from sight, the stiff "petals" re-closing over the spot on which the Speakster had stood, and the golden light vanishing as the Light-of-Day sprang bluely into harsh life against the crystal dome. Lloyd turned obediently, as soon as movement was possible in the dispersing crowd, and started toward his point of entrance, the arcade that would lead him into his sector of the Hive.

Without warning, the Proposition Screens flickered on, and the crowd's movement jerked to a confused halt. Then, as though collectively realizing that there was time enough to be checked by the Goons after the Vote, people formed into neat lines, queu-

ing up before the Vote Boxes that lined the walls.

LLOYD took another look at his watch. Five past eight. That gave him till ten past to arrive at the Vote Box. With mounting anxiety, he counted heads in the line before him. He was twelfth. If each person took the allotted thirty seconds—He'd miss his Vote, have to be hospitalized for Readjustment. He tried to stay calm as the line advanced.

With two minutes to go, he found four people before him. The first, a grey-suited man with very little hair, knocked his plate in the slot—Then stood and pondered. It was fully twenty-five seconds before he depressed one of the buttons in the Vote Box's interior, where his choice would remain secret. Another few seconds to retrieve his plate, and then a full six precious seconds while the next person, a skinny woman very near the compulsory retirement age, fumbled in a deep leather purse for her card. And *she* pondered . . .

Sweat sprang out on Lloyd's forehead. There wouldn't be enough time. There *couldn't* be . . . unless—

"Miss!" he said, to the back of the small blonde head in front of him. The girl spun about to face him, dark green eyes wide in fright, breath hissing be-

tween parted lips. "I didn't mean to startle you," he said, contritely. "It's just that—" It was terrible, telling such an awful confidence to a total stranger, but it was the only way to convince her quickly. "I've missed twice this quarter," he blurted. "Not my fault. I'm a good Kinsman, honestly. It was line-jams, both times. Too many people for too few Vote Boxes. You must believe me!"

"What—" she said, a little dazedly. "What can I do?"

"Let me have your place in line!" begged Lloyd. "I've timed it. Less than a minute left till Count, and two ahead of me, including yourself. *Please* help me!"

"I—" she said, with a funny, almost hysterical smile. "I don't know why you should be so—" Then she stepped aside, swiftly. "Go ahead. Hurry!"

Lloyd leaped into the breach without even pausing to voice his thanks. As the young man before him stepped away, Lloyd jammed his plate into the slot, and shoved his fingers inside the handspace. A fumble, and he had a button, he didn't know which one. Pro was right, Con was left, but he just prodded it inward without checking its location. Then the light died on the screen, and his plate popped out of the slot. He caught it deftly, sighed in quavering relief, and

turned to thank his benefactor. He saw her, trailing after the departing people toward one of the arcades, shuffling her feet, apparently in no hurry. Then an uncomfortable thought struck him, and he ran to catch up with her.

"Miss—!" he said, taking her arm. Again the brief look of fear on her features, then she smiled. It was a small, very tired smile. "You needn't thank me—" she began.

"I wasn't going to—" said Lloyd. Then, embarrassed, "I mean, of *course* I'd thank you, but that isn't why I came after you. I just realized—Have *you* missed any Votes this quarter? I'd hate to be the cause of *your* Readjustment . . ."

"There's no danger," she said softly, "of my getting in trouble for non-voting."

HE suddenly remembered the words of the Speakster, and dropped the girl's hand as though it had burnt him. "You—You're the—"

"Please!" begged the girl, before his voice could rise in a warning shout to the crowd. "Don't give me away!"

"They'll get you anyhow," he said flatly, with a note of near-pity in his voice. "By rights, I should raise a cry right this instant, to save the Goons the trouble of checking all the *good*

Kinsmen." A secondary thought hit him, and he took a very short step backward. "And you're diseased. The longer you remain in contact with the crowd, the more likely a spread of the contagion."

"I'm *not*!" she almost shouted, then clenched her jaws, and got control of herself. Bright moisture began to trickle from the corners of her eyes, and she dabbed angrily at the warm salty drops. "I was hurt, yes!" she said, suddenly pulling back the long sleeve of her bright green dress, for a brief moment. Lloyd saw the ragged, pink-edged cicatrix on the underside of her forearm, and winced. "It's healed," she said. "I didn't *need* the hospital, don't you see?"

Lloyd saw, and stood there, his mind fumbling dizzily for a direction to take. The last straggling ends of the crowd were moving into the arcades, now. Lloyd took his bearings, saw that only one or two people were now headed for his own arcade, and began to back off in that direction, saying, "I'm sorry, I'm so terribly sorry. I must go, now."

She nodded, once, then turned her back on him, and stood, small and helpless, in the growing void that was the Temple proper. Lloyd turned from her and started toward his arcade. Then he stopped and looked back at her.

She *was* healed, after all . . . He remembered with a sense of shame the time he'd broken a finger, and hadn't reported for hospital assignment, because a favorite cowboy was at the neighborhood theatre that afternoon. He never *had* gone in, then, being fearful lest the examining doctors notice that he'd delayed. The finger had healed itself, a trifle crookedly, and Lloyd had never told anyone of his dereliction, not even his father. Especially not his father.

Suddenly, he turned and ran back to the girl. "Do they know you?" he said, fiercely, frightened by his own daring.

"Wh- Who?" gasped the girl, startled by his reappearance. "*Who* know me?" Then, catching his meaning, "The goons, you mean?" Lloyd nodded impatiently. "No, they don't. But they don't have to. I—I have no Vote-plate."

"Can't you girls hang onto *anything*?!" he muttered. "Don't tell me *yours* fell in the sea from a Tourgyro?"

"You say that as though you know somebody whose *did*," said the girl.

"My fiancée," he explained, adding, with an embarrassed grin, "I'll be twenty-five just after next Marriage Day. I found her in the phonebook listings."

"But—What'd *she* do?" the

girl persisted. "Without a Voteplate, she could be picked up any time, in the first Goon inspection that arose."

"Take this," he urged, pressing something into her hand. "Your arcade is third over from mine. When you get outside, wait. I'll meet you there and get this back. Don't fail me, please."

He spun about and dashed toward his arcade, leaving her standing in the center of the floor, staring dumbfounded at the flat metal plate in her hand. Trembling, she turned toward the indicated arch, and followed swiftly after the stragglers entering it, her perspiring fingers clamped rigidly upon the engraved face of the Voteplate.

CHAPTER 2

LLOYD didn't like Goons. He knew he was supposed to recognize in them the ultimate in police efficiency, but they still gave him chills. A Goon, a Governmental Opposer of Neutrality, was a fearful sight. All were of a size, equal to a micrometer-breadth, a monstrous eight feet of thick metal and ponderous wheels, bathed from base to apex in the blurry grey pulsations of their protective force-fields, through which no power on Earth could penetrate. The metal arms were multi-jointed and dextrous to a fantastic degree, despite the clumsy look of the

thick tripodal fingers at the ends of the arms. The "eyes" were wide-set telelenses, a pair of them, to report back all they saw to the Brain itself, deep beneath the teeming streets of the Hive. And each Goon spoke with the cold, inflectionless tones of the Brain, the flatly indifferent voice that could only emanate from a mind of glowing vacuum tubes and magnetic fields. From any or all of a Goon's six fingertips could spring the dreaded Snapper Beam, an electronic refinement of vibrations that struck the human nervous system almost identically with the chemical effect of strychnine poisoning, except that a Snapper Beam worked instantly, and always fatally. A brush of the invisible force, and a man's face creased into the frenzied grin of a madman, his legs danced wildly, uncontrollably, and the muscles of his back contracted tightly, relentlessly, remorselessly, until his spine cracked in two.

Lloyd had never seen it employed, save in the theatres. Dispersal of insurrection by Goons was a popular theme in films. A mob could be efficiently halted by a sweeping Snapper Beam, to fall like broken puppets. Goons never lost a film battle. Or a real one.

"Name," said the Goon, as the woman in front of Lloyd moved quickly out of the arcade. Goons

could not inflect. You had to sense their questions.

"Lloyd Bodger, Junior," said Lloyd, extending his Voteplate for perusal. The three fingers took the plate from his fingers, and slid it into a slot in the chest. A sharp click, and the plate was returned to him, his number now on file in the vast memory banks of the Brain.

"Your sector," said the Goon. With his Voteplate date on file, he would be hard put to tell a lie. Any discrepancy in his statements would go hard on him. He hoped, shakily, that the unknown girl had a sharp memory. She'd only have a few moments to memorize the information on the plate.

These thoughts flickered through Lloyd's mind in the split second between the Goon's second query and his outwardly calm response, "Hundred-Level, Angle One, Unit B."

Lloyd's sector was only one short of being the most important in the Hive. The President lived in Unit A, in the same Angle. Lloyd Bodger, Senior, was Secondary Speakster of the entire Hive. But Goons were no respecters of persons. And less so were they respecters of mere offspring of persons.

"Assignment," droned the Goon.

"Null," said Lloyd, indicating the question was inapplicable

"Goal," the Goon sub-questioned.

"Secondary Speakster of the Hive by inheritance."

The Goon's arms suddenly dropped to its thick sides, it swiveled completely about-face, and rolled swiftly off toward the far end of the arcade. The interview was over, and it had gone, abruptly as that. No "Thanks for your time and trouble", or "You pass inspection", or "That will be all". Goons were built for basic efficiency, not for the subtler nuances of civilized conversation.

OUTSIDE the mouth of the arcade, Light-of-Day was still stark bright blue throughout the Hive. Light-of-Day was dimmed to Ultrablack at ten P.M. every night of the nine-day week save Temple Day, when it was left on until eleven-fifteen, giving time enough for the Kinsmen at the ten P.M. Service to return to their sectors. No one went out in Ultrablack. You could see nothing when Light-of-Day went out. A struck flame would burn in Ultrablack, but the light of the flame would not show. Only the Goons could see what went on, then. If going out during Ultrablack were absolutely necessary, as it sometimes was on the Governmental level, a Goon would come and take you to your destination. Being found upon

the street after Ultrablack was a form of rebellion; you would then have to be hospitalized for Readjustment.

Just as this last thought was flitting across his mind, Lloyd saw the girl, standing uncertainly at the entrance to the arcade he'd sent her to, a solemn, green-clad figure in the midst of the converging people moving into the entrance toward the nine P.M. Service. Her face lighted up when she saw him, and Lloyd was disconcerted to note the tears that sprang to her eyes despite her welcoming smile. "How can I ever—?" she started, but a quick squeeze of his fingers on her arm stopped her.

"Not here," said Lloyd, awkwardly. "Come with me." She fell into step alongside him without question. He led the way to a bar near the interlevel lift. They said nothing to one another until they were seated in a secluded booth, and had pressed the drink-selector that would light alongside their booth-number behind the bar. They almost spoke, then, but the waiter showed up too quickly, and they had to wait until he'd checked their ages on the Voteplates and left.

"Why did you do it?" she said softly.

Lloyd made a grimace. "Because I'm a damned fool, I guess."

The girl nodded seriously.

"You are, you know. Taking a risk like that—! *You* might have been detected, yourself."

Lloyd looked at her, puzzled. "Detected?"

"As a member of the movement, of course," she said. "You're the first I've been able to contact since my escape. The progress you've all made amazes me. Where in heaven did you people learn to duplicate Voteplates!? I couldn't believe it when the Goon passed me."

"Hold on—" said Lloyd, pressing his hand furiously hard upon hers where it lay on the smooth table top between them. "Don't say anymore, please. You've made an error. I am *not* a member of your movement." The girl's eyes widened in sudden fear.

"But—Why did you help me? Who *are* you?"

Lloyd sighed. "I've already answered your first question. And it is with the most abject embarrassment that I answer your second: I'm Lloyd Bodger, the Junior version, the only child of the Secondary Speakster of the Hive." He saw the utter dismay in her face, and added dryly, "Are you impressed?"

"Shattered is more like it," she said when she'd found her voice again. "But an extra Voteplate—"

"I can explain the plate," said Lloyd. "It belongs to my fiancée,

Grace Horton. I was going to her place tonight, after Service, with it."

"But you said she'd dropped it— Oh. I see."

"Exactly. Lost in the sea, from a Tourgyro. The Goon in the 'gyro saw it happen, which was lucky for Grace. He relayed it instantly to the Brain, and when the 'gyro landed, another Goon was waiting at the field with a temporary pass for her. Another person, by the way, would have needed Readjustment, being so careless, but Grace, as my fiancée, carries just enough weight to get her over the humps. New Voteplates have to be approved through the President's office, of course. When this one came in, today, it was turned over to my father, who gave it to me. I'm not as official as the Goon who'd ordinarily deliver one of these, but even protocol bows to sentiment, now and then."

HE suddenly curled the fingers of the hand beneath his own until they lay fisted in his palm. She looked up at him, then, sensing almost to the word what he was about to say. "Miss— You know I could turn you in for what you inadvertently told me, just now. I won't, though. You have enough counter-information on me to make things hot even for the son of an official."

"I wouldn't—!"

"Be that as it may," said Lloyd, "let me say something: Quit. Quit now. Get out of this movement, whatever it is. You can't win, you know. The Goons are invincible. And I hate to think of you, falling under a Snapper Beam."

"Death is death," the girl sighed. "One way or another."

He looked at her, genuinely at sea. "I'm afraid I don't know what you mean, Miss. I only helped you avoid hospitalization because I myself— Well, let my reasons go. But you shouldn't *fear* going. Sure, it's annoying to be laid up for awhile, out of the swing of things, but—"

The girl pulled her hand away. "You're joking," she said. "You must be joking. If you're truly the son of the Secondary Speaker, you *must* know the truth!"

"I still don't follow you," Lloyd said sincerely.

"You *don't* know!" the girl said, shaken. "You're really convinced that— Listen to me, listen carefully: There are no hospitals! There is no Readjustment! There is only death."

"You're out of your mind," Lloyd said, recoiling from her vehemence. "Of course there are hospitals. I've *seen* them—!"

"Sure," said the girl. "From a Tourgyro. Or in the movies. But have you ever *been* to one? Have you ever met anybody who *returned* from one?"

"My dear girl," Lloyd protested, really growing concerned for her, "do you realize the *odds* against meeting a hospital patient? With disease almost completely obliterated, and a civilization of ten million people—!"

"Exactly," said the girl, with a peculiar note of triumph. "Ten million people. Never so much more as ten million and one, and seldom any less. Doesn't that perturb you?"

"The wars—" Lloyd began.

"Please," the girl groaned, shaking her head. "Spare me the enlistment speeches. I know the tales of all the men lost in the battles every quarter, giving their lives in defense of the Hive. Except that there *aren't* any wars, nor battles, any more! There's nothing out on the planet except wild animals and growing plants! We're the only ten million people on Earth!"

"That's impossible," said Lloyd. "It's childish to be so insular-minded. Our Hive is one of ten thousand such—"

"Have you seen another, even *one* other?"

"For what?" said Lloyd. "All the Hives are alike."

"They've really got you brainwashed, haven't they! You believe everything the Brain dictates, without question!"

"I have to," said Lloyd, with what he thought was irrefutable logic. "There's no way of check-

ing things like—Well, like your story of no wars. I mean, can I be expected to check out ten million people to see if the number of war dead coincides with the total in the Brain?"

"No," said the girl. "You can't. Not so long as your movements are restricted to certain sectors, and you're told which street to use, which side of the street, which direction to walk, which hand to turn the knob with, which—"

"Those are only traffic rules," Lloyd objected. "Can you imagine ten million people all going to the same sector at the same time? It'd be disastrous."

"Sure," said the girl. "For the Brain. People might confer."

LLOYD shrugged and gave up. "I can see there's no dissuading you," he said regretfully. "I only hope that when you're finally caught—"

"They teach me the error of my ways?" she smiled tightly.

"I don't mean it with the inflection *you* give it," he said. "I really would like to see you get help. You need help, you know."

"The kind I need is the kind you gave me in The Temple," she said. "Illegal help. Shelter. Time to make plans. Time to figure out some way of telling the Hive what's happening to it!"

"You know I've gone farther than I should, already."

"I know," she said. She took the Voteplate from her handbag, and held it musingly in her fingers. "I really should keep this," she said, then saw the sudden anxiety in his eyes and relented. "Here, take it." She slid it under his hand. Lloyd palmed it gratefully. "Our movement could use a hammerlock on a higher-up," she said, almost wistfully. "But you're too nice a guy to put the screws on. It'd be a cruel way to show my gratitude for what you did tonight."

"I did nothing, really," Lloyd said. "I simply saw how fearful you were of the hospital, and didn't have the heart to turn you in."

"Wait," said the girl. Lloyd stopped speaking. She looked thoughtful, then leaned forward, very confidentially, and asked, "Does your father like you? Do you two get along?"

"What is this?" Lloyd demanded suspiciously. "Instant psychoanalysis?"

"Nothing like that," the girl snapped, exasperated. "I mean, does he *like* you, as a son, care what *happens* to you?"

"Well," Lloyd said, slowly, "he'd probably beat my head in for what I pulled, tonight, with you . . . But—yes, he does like me. And he cares about my welfare."

"Then do this one favor for me," said the girl. "When you

get to your Unit tonight, tell him you feel rotten, all sick inside, and that you think you should be hospitalized."

"But why should I—?"

"Just tell him. And make it convincing. And, if he really cares about you— See what happens." She rose from her place. "It'll look funny if I leave alone. Walk me to the street?"

Once outside, she glanced about, uneasily. "It's after ten. Got to find a place to hide before Ultrablack."

"But listen—!" Lloyd said, abruptly realizing the grim night that lay in store for her, with blinding blackness like a palpable pall in the streets, and only Goons rolling through the empty streets. "You've got to have *someplace* to go!"

"Is there someplace? Without a Voteplate?" she said with weary rhetoric. "I think not. Thanks. Goodnight. And good-bye."

SHE started off down the street. Lloyd hesitated a moment then rushed after her. "Wait, I'll hide you."

"Why should you take such a risk, for me?" she said.

"It's not for you," Lloyd said, telling as the full truth something that was only part of the whole. "It's for me. Purely selfish. I risk more if you're caught tonight. When they question

you, under truth drugs, about your escape from the Temple—and I'm sure *that* has them curious—you will be unable to avoid implicating me."

"Is— Is that your only reason? Your own skin?" she said.

"Yes," he said, forcing conviction into the word.

She shrugged and took his arm. "A fugitive can't afford to be choosy. I have no prospect of escape *but* you. I'll let you hide me . . . if it'll make you feel safer."

Lloyd nodded, and started toward the lift that would take the two of them up to the Hundred-Level. It was only as they got aboard, and he'd keyed the lift-switch with his Voteplate, that he thought to ask, "By the way — What's your name?"

"Andra," she said. "Andra Corby."

"A nice name. I like it," said Lloyd. "I wasn't sure if you'd tell me your name."

Andra shrugged. "It'll be in tomorrow's papers, anyway."

Lloyd looked at her uncomfortably, but she was staring straight ahead at the grillwork gate of the lift.

CHAPTER 3

GRACE HORTON appraised herself in the mirror, and was not pleased with what she saw. "Face it, Grace," she said aloud. "You are positively hopeless."

She tilted her head to one side. "Well, nearly hopeless." Her eyes were good, that was something. Wide, gray and thickly lashed, they were her best feature. Her nose was just too snub to be pert. Her mouth, though her lips were generous, and her teeth well-aligned, had too much slack at the outer edges. She either held it in a perpetual smile— "An easy way to be mistaken for an idiot," she remarked bitterly—or it sagged. Her hair, an unfortunate mustard-and-brass shade, would not hold a curl for more than two hours at the outside. "All I need," she decided ruefully, "is a brand-new head."

Grace leaned away from the mirror to consult the alarm clock which lay almost hidden behind an impressive array of cosmetics. Five till eleven. "He's not coming," she said to her image. "Give it up girl. He said he'd come, and he probably meant it when he said it, but he's not coming." She turned from the mirror and began to undress, beside the single three-quarter-sized bed. "And why should he come?" she asked herself tiredly. "He doesn't love you. He never— to his credit, damn it—said he did, either. Hive Law requires that all males shall marry by the age of twenty-five, or be taken for Readjustment. Bachelors are not good for

racial survival, unquote. Unwed girls may list themselves in the classified section of the phone book, along with their qualifications, then start sweating it out by the phone. So I did, so he called me, so we're engaged. But that doesn't mean we have to like it. Or that *he* has to, anyhow. And I'm not sure that *I* do."

Grace toyed a moment with the idea of submitting herself for Readjustment, then gave it up. "A new face wouldn't help," she decided. "What I need is a new outlook. Besides, what have I got to crab about? I'm engaged, I'm only twenty-four, and someday I'll be the wife of Secondary Speakster of the Hive. So hurry for *me*," she added, listlessly, as she flipped the coverlet back, and hopped into bed. She lay there in the glaring Light-of-Day, waiting for Ultrablack. When it came, in a soundless rush of darkness, she spoke just once more. "But *why* didn't he come!"

CHAPTER 4

DIDN'T you tell your future daughter-in-law she'd been reassigned to a new Temple Day? asked the President. "She went last night, regardless."

The man addressed, Lloyd Bodger, Senior, scratched his head. "Seems to me I did, Fred.

I could have forgotten, of course."

Fredric Stanton, President and Prime Speakster of the Hive, nodded and shrugged the topic away. "Probably hated to miss a chance to be with your boy. Nice kid, that Lloyd."

"Thanks," Bodger said dryly, keeping a firm eye on his superior. Stanton was buttering him up to something, he knew. "Full of youthful spirits, too, your boy. I can easily understand why he might—well—grow overly romantic."

"Come to the point, Fred," said Bodger. "Lloyd's behavior can't hurt you unless it hits your only sensitive area: your public image. So what's he done? Drunk too much, pinched a waitress's rump, scratched a four-letter word on a Temple?"

"Don't take this too lightly, fellow Speakster," said Stanton, purposefully. "Running the Hive is like walking on eggs in hot cleats. You're either careful or things get a mite sticky."

"We always have the Goons," said Bodger.

"A Hive full of ten million back-broken corpses isn't much of a domain," snapped the President. "Have you forgotten that extra-marital peccadillos are frowned upon in Hive society? People who play around get hospitalized, quick."

"So what has all this to do

with my son?" demanded Bodger.

"He was seen, last night, bringing his fiancée up to this level, shortly before Ultrablack."

Bodger sighed, then nodded slowly and leaned back in his chair. "And the girl?" he said grimly.

"So far as I know, she's still on your premises. I think you had better have a talk with her. And your son."

"I'm sorry, Fred," said Bodger. "I'll make certain there is no recurrence."

"You'd better," said the President. "If I topple, you're on the next pedestal down. I might drag you along, just by inertia." He turned and left the office with cold dignity.

"*Crap!*" the elder Bodger spat aloud. "I've *told* that kid to toe the mark in public!"

CHAPTER 5

BODGER had only a short distance to walk to Unit B from his office. His temper, despite his efforts at self-control, was seething dangerously when he entered his foyer. He crossed the mammoth parlor toward the archway at its rear, where a short corridor led to the sleeping quarters. Bodger arrived at the door of his son's bedroom. Then, with his hand upon the knob, he froze, and a ghastly pallor spread itself across his rugged features.

A hand came up swiftly to his stomach, holding it, pressing inward against the sudden spasm he had felt, and he stepped swiftly across the few remaining feet of carpeted hallway to the door of his own room, through it, and swiftly into his personal bathroom, locking the thick door behind him. The room was swimming like a thing seen through warm oil as he slid open the mirrored panel of the medicine chest and removed a large jar of pale granulated crystals. Violently nauseated, he managed to unscrew the lid and dump a handful of the crystals into the water tumbler. He ran the warm water into the tumbler—it would dissolve the crystals faster—and drank the now-glutinous solution. Then the tumbler fell from his weak, perspiring fingers and smashed into spicules in the basin. He took no notice, hands rigid against the rim of the basin, shoulders shaking uncontrollably, his large, grey-thatched head sunken wearily upon his chest. He stood like that for two minutes, until the room began to settle down, and its outlines took on solidity once more.

"A close one," he muttered, aloud.

When the eyes that met his in the glass were no longer bleared with sick pain, he combed his hair neatly, and impatiently be-

gan to remove his sweat-soaked shirt and necktie. Before returning to his bedroom to change into fresh dry garments, he slid the mirrored panel closed. It clicked sharply and locked. Countersunk into the tiled wall, there was no indication that such a space existed behind it. Only Bodger, Senior, knew which tiles to depress in which order to open that panel. In a disease-free society, a medicine-chest was taboo; it implied that its user had no faith in the Government-run hospitals. Bodger went into his bedroom, dropping the damp shirt and tie atop the clothes hamper in the closet. There was an ancient leather bag, with shoulder-strap, on the closet floor. Bodger carried this out into the room, opened the flap,

When a small light glowed on the indicator panel, he lifted a short metal rod, and played the end of it slowly back and forth just below his fleshy ribs. The light flickered on and off steadily. Bodger looked sharply at the needle of a dial beside the light. "Thank heaven," he whispered, and returned case and contents to the closet. Then, after laying out a set of dry things, he considered a moment, ran a hand testily over his stomach region, and grunted in annoyance. He was still slightly overwrought; he could feel the juices inside him itching to spurt into his

bloodstream and arouse him into his erstwhile pitch of anger. It wouldn't do. It wouldn't do at all.

Angered at his own infirmity, he nevertheless set the alarm for an hour's time ahead, in case he dozed, then lay back on the bed and closed his eyes.

IN the adjoining room, where the door to the hallway was securely bolted, Lloyd Bodger, Junior, stood up near the wall, in a stance he'd held for many minutes, the side of his head pressed tightly against the plastic paneling. "I think he's lying down," he whispered. "I heard the bedsprings creak."

Andra Corby, her face lowered against the knees which she hugged to her chest on the bed, shivered a bit, then straightened her long, smooth legs until she was simply pillow-propped against the headboard once more, and her arms had refolded across her breast. "Are you sure?" she asked tautly. "The longer I stay here, the more frightened I become."

Lloyd spun to face her, almost angrily. "Will you *stop* that relentless nobility! I'm doing this for my *own* skin, remember? I don't care what happens to you; I care what happens to *me* if something happens to you!"

"Your father," she said, enunciating with icy calm and slow

clarity, "is going to hear you . . ."

Lloyd controlled himself, his fists knotting at his sides.

Seeing he was relaxing, Andra said, a little less frigidly, "I thought— I thought he was coming in *here*."

"He stopped outside my door, all right . . ." Lloyd mused. "Then went to his room in a rush. I don't get it."

He listened some more at the wall. Behind him, Andra giggled, suddenly. He glanced at her. "What—?"

"I just thought— What if your father's on the other side, listening to hear what *you're* doing. I'm just picturing two grown men, frowning in earnest concentration, their ears separated by a few inches of plastic, and it's funny."

"Not if you're correct, it isn't," said Lloyd, and Andra stopped smiling. "As soon as he hears you, the jig's up."

"Maybe—" She leaned forward with eager hope. "Maybe it would be a *good* thing, Lloyd. He's a powerful man in the Hive. If he knew your problem, he could use his influence to do something, couldn't he?"

"My father loves me, sure," said Lloyd, with a wry quirk to his lips. "But I don't think he loves anything so much as his position in our society. My consorting with a fugitive might

put the kibosh on the next election."

Just then the phone rang and Lloyd couldn't avoid knocking Andra to the floor in his effort to get the receiver off the hook before the bell could shatter the silence once more.

"Hello?" he said, extending an upright palm toward Andra to beg her continued silence.

"Lloyd?" said a subdued, tense female voice.

"Grace!" he said, remembering his promise to come by with her card. "What—What do you want?"

"I've got to see you, Lloyd," she said. "About last night."

"When?" he asked.

"As soon as you can make it."

"Well—Maybe in . . ." Lloyd peered across the room at his bureau clock. Almost noon. Non-essential lift usage precluded until after the twelve-to-one lunch period. If he hurried, he could key the lift-switch before the ban. Lifts in use were never disempowered. "If I catch the lift, fifteen minutes. Otherwise not till after one."

". . . All right."

LLOYD grabbed his jacket from the back of a chair. Andra stood up, apparently unharmed, and slid into her shoes. "Where are we going?" she asked, smoothing her dress.

Lloyd looked at her. He hadn't

considered—"I guess you'd better come with me," he said. "I'd hate you caught in the house. In my bedroom especially.

There were seconds to spare when he closed the gate and thumbed Grace's level, the ninety-third. Anyone was permitted to travel to a level beneath their own. To go higher, you needed a duly authorized Voteplate, or an invitation from a higher-level dweller. The lift dropped smoothly down inside the shaft. Halfway to Grace's level, a red light glowed on the level-indicator. When they reached their getting-off place, the buttons would function no more until one o'clock. It saved needless crowding if lunching workers remained on their own levels. Otherwise, if a line were too long, a worker might be tempted to try his luck lower down, and if too many decided simultaneously, the bland flow of human traffic might be imbalanced, agglomerated beyond the capacity of the transportation systems. Inefficiency would result, with people returning late to their work, restaurants having too much leftover food, or not enough to go around. The Hive was too delicately geared for imbalance. So the lifts went off during lunch.

"Grace Horton must be trusted," Andra said suddenly. "Look, Lloyd," she clutched his

arm, forcing him to meet her gaze and listen. "If she hasn't found out, fine. Even Goons can't find out what a person doesn't know. But if she *has* found out someone else used her cards— And called *you*, instead of reporting it to the authorities . . . Then she can be trusted to hear about me."

"I hope you're right," said Lloyd. The gate opened.

"We'll never find out standing here," said Andra. "Come on, Lloyd." She started out ahead of him. He pondered the courage of this small blonde girl, then felt a wave of shame at his own cowardice. He was in this up to his earlobes already. No amount of explaining could ever make up his hours of ignoring the basic laws of the Hive. And he simultaneously realized two things: If Andra's theories were all wrong, he would merely be Readjusted and returned to his life same as before. And if they were correct—What difference did it make *how* long he dallied with the Hive's opposition? You could only be destroyed once, and even his delay in shouting the alarm when he'd recognized Andra as the fugitive was grounds for a medical checkup.

"What the hell," Lloyd said miserably to himself. He was no safer standing on the cross-sector walk than in the depths of dark intrigue with Andra.

CHAPTER 6

BODGER! . . . *Bodger!* . . .

A hand was shaking his shoulder roughly, the elder Bodger realized with annoyance. His eyes focused on the face of Fredric Stanton. Bodger shrugged the hand away, and sat up groggily.

"As I always suspected," he said, brushing at the crusted salt on his chest, "the Hive can't run an hour without me at the helm." He got to his feet and stretched.

Stanton, frowning at his sarcasm, let it pass without comment; he had a more important topic to discuss. "The tally of last evening's Vote just came in to my office," he said tightly. "It was a near-complete poll, only a few thousand missing."

Bodger, still trying to get his mind readjusted to the idea of being wide awake again, started toward the bathroom and a warm shower, muttering, "Hooray for progress. Is that any reason to waken a man—"

"Bodger—!"

He stopped at the open door to the bathroom and turned his head toward the President. "All right, out with it." Without knowing how, exactly, Bodger knew it was about Lloyd again. And worse than before.

Stanton reached inside his suitjacket and withdrew a folded legal paper, a black-lettered stiff

document with an illuminated margin of pale orange. "I have here," he said, watching Bodger's face, "an order for Readjustment. It just came up the tube from the Brain. Do I have to read you the name of the Kinsman on it?"

"Good lord," Bodger whispered. "What— What could he possibly have done to—?"

"As I said, there was a Vote last night. The proposition was a simple one: "Shall, in the interests of good government, the draft age be lowered to fifteen?" You want to know how Lloyd voted?"

"Not *con*?! He has more brains than to— I've *told* him all the catch-phrases that demand a *pro* Vote. Is there any possibility of—?"

"Error?" Stanton smiled bitterly. "You of all people should know better. It was Lloyd's plate in the slot when the Vote was cast, all right. The Brain can't be wrong on that. The alternative solutions to the problem— alternatives to his making a *de-liberate* Vote against the interests of good government, I mean — are very few: One— He was not paying attention to the screen. Two— He struck the *con* button by accident. Three— He let somebody else use his plate. Any one of which reasons is in *itself* grounds for Readjustment!"

"Fred, you wouldn't . . ."

"Of course not, Bodger. I had the incident erased from the memory circuits immediately. This is the only copy of his Readjustment order. You can keep it, tear it up—*Frame* it, if you like! That's not why I'm here."

"You don't have to tell me," Bodger sighed. "In the past sixteen hours, the son of the Secondary Speakster has blithely violated the social and political ethics of the Hive, to the extent that his destruction—"

"*Bodger!*" Stanton flared. "You have a rotten habit of—"

"Pretty words don't alleviate the truth of the situation. You know, and I know, what Readjustment is! A one-way trip down the incinerator chute!"

"All right, we know it! So shut up about it, and let's keep it to ourselves! What I'm here to find out is— What the hell are you going to do about this idiot son of yours? This is *twice* he's had to be covered for, in a damned short time, Bodger. I can't spend my time rescuing Lloyd from something I'm starting to think he may well deserve!"

"Aw, Fred, you wouldn't let—"

"The hell I *wouldn't!* I like Lloyd, and I like you, but if it starts shaking up my position in the Hive, the *two* of you can go to blazes! Do I make myself clear?"

"I— I'll talk to him, Fred, really I will."

"You mean you *haven't!*?" Stanton exploded. "What's the idea of coming home here in the middle of the day, then? I thought you were going to—" He took a closer look at the other man, then scowled. "Say, are you all right, Bodger? Your color's kind of funny. You're not . . . *sick?*"

"Of course not!" Bodger snapped. "I'm *shaken*, if you must know. I came right home here to chew Lloyd out for last night's episode with the Horton girl, and when I couldn't find him, I got so mad that I thought I'd better lie down and cool off. I don't want a scene if I meet him in a public place. *That would* get the word out in a hurry, wouldn't it!"

"Still, you look kind of—" Stanton halted, and gave the subject up with a sigh. "Maybe I'd be, too, if I got a couple of jolts like you did. Okay, Bodger. See you back at the office, later." He turned and went out.

BODGER stood listening until he heard the front door close. Then, still shirtless, he went into the hallway and threw open the door of Lloyd's room without knocking. It was empty. But there was the elusive memory of a sweet fragrance still hovering in the air there.

Bodger swore softly, and returned to his own room to shower and dress. He had some heavy thinking to do.

When, minutes later, he was refreshed, dressed, and ready to appear in public again, he'd made a decision. He needed to discover the root of Lloyd's dangerous behavior. And the likely person to know something about it would be Lloyd's fiancée, Grace Horton.

Bodger left his Unit and started toward the lift. It was still short of one o'clock, but the Voteplate of the Secondary Speakster cut through a lot of mechanical red tape.

The lift arrived at Hundred-Level within seconds after his knocking his plate beside the call-button. He got aboard and began the descent toward Ninety-Three.

CHAPTER 7

ROBERT LENNICK leaned far back in his swivel chair, and sighed a deep sigh at the ceiling, being careful it would not be heard by the party on the other end of the wire.

"Now, listen, sweetheart," he said. "You are good. Got that? Good, with a capital tremendous. But you don't click in urban dramas. You're too—" He didn't want to say tall, or gigantic, though these words were more readily at tongue-tip. "—too

Junoesque for the parts we're casting . . . No, I mean it. You just— Well, you're just not the housewife *type*, darling!"

The speaker crackled in his ear for another minute, and Lennick sat and studied the piled-up scripts in his in-box with wearily narrowed eyes. When his chance came again, he said, "No, not today. I'm sorry, Lona, really I am . . . It's impossible, that's why . . . All right, if you have to know— We're shooting Frederic Stanton, that's why—"

The speaker's reply to the phrase made some of the color wash out of Lennick's smooth-shaven face, and this time he interrupted with a snarl. "You better watch it, Lona, baby! A smartaleck pun like that can get you sent to the hospital. You know damned well I mean we're going to photograph him . . . Okay, but simmer down, huh?! . . . Okay, baby, I will . . . Yes, as soon as *anything*, anything at *all* in your line comes by my desk . . . Word of honor . . . Sure thing . . . Yeah, that'd be lovely. We'll do it sometime . . . Okay, Lona— Lona . . . I said—. . . O-*kay*, Lona!" He spat out the last words, and clamped the phone into the cradle with vicious pleasure. "Dumb broad!" he mumbled, then got up and opened the door to his anteroom.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, Frank," he said to the tall, gangly youth who rose from a chrome-and-plastic chair and came into the main office.

The man called Frank sank into a chair and fiddled idly with a button on his shirt until Lennick had the door closed again. When the youthful producer was once more back in his swivel chair, eyeing his visitor, Frank lost his casual air and locked eyes with him, disconcertingly steady blue eyes, and Lennick had to fight an impulse to wince.

"Trouble?" he said, after a moment.

Frank knitted his brows, and cupped his upper lip in the moist curve of his lower before replying, without emotion, "Depends." He fiddled with the button again, then gave it up and stood. He preferred pacing as he talked. "It's— Well, it's about Andra, Bob."

Lennick stiffened. "They got her . . . ?" His relief was only a conditional relaxation when the other man shook his head; he was keyed to tighten up again without notice. "So where *is* she? *How* is she?"

"Fine, to answer your second question. I don't know the answer to the first, though I could make some guesses. The thing is— We better get the word out to the others not to try and contact her."

"Not to—!?" said Lennick, stunned. "But she needs help, bad. She has to hide until we can—! . . . Frank, what's the matter? You look so damned funny!"

"Okay, I'll level with you, Bob." Frank stood at the front of the desk and leaned his hands on the blotter, staring down at the anxious face of his friend. "Last night, after her escape, Andra tried to hide in the Temple, up on ninety-five. The Goons were right after her, Bob. There wasn't even any Service because of her. Every person in that Temple was checked—one by one—for Voteplates. She *had* one, Bob. She got *out*."

"That's crazy!" Lennick gasped. "Where in hell—? Frank, I *saw* them collect her Voteplate after the accident. She couldn't have gotten it back. And she couldn't have a *spare*, I know, so—?" He saw the uneasiness still in the man Frank's features, and was quiet. "There's *more* . . . ?"

"After her escape," Frank said flatly, taking no joy in telling the tale, "She met a man, outside the arcade, went with him for cocktails, then up to his level. That's the last she was seen, Bob. It was the Hundred-Level. None of us are authorized to go that high without escort."

"But who the hell did *Andra* know on the top?" Bob blurted.

"She's given autographs to a few higher-ups. but—"

"It was Lloyd Bodger, Junior, Bob. They acted like old friends. *Now* do you see why I think it's **unwise** if she's contacted?"

LENNICK suddenly surged from his chair and nearly tore the shirtfront from his visitor in an angry fist, as he yanked the other's face close to his own. "You can't mean that about Andra, Frank. You *know* her! You've worked with her— And I . . . I know her better than anyone, Frank. She's not a traitor. She wouldn't betray us."

"I wish," said Frank, clamly ignoring the enraged aspect of Lennick's attitude, "you'd put your heart back where it belongs and think it over just once with your brains . . ."

Bright beads of moisture suddenly appeared in Lennick's eyes, and he released his grasp of the other man's shirt and sank down into his chair, burying his face upon his arms. "There's an explanation," he mumbled into the blotter. "I know there is. She wouldn't—" he lifted his head, suddenly hopeful. "Frank, we're still *here*! If she told all she knew, we'd be atomized by now, right?"

Frank looked uncertain. "Maybe. At least— It's a point in her favor. I don't know. You've got me shook, now." He sat back

down and pondered, shaking his head slowly back and forth. "If she *isn't* hollering for the Goons— What's she doing with Junior? A guy like that doesn't take perfect strangers up to his place, does he?"

"I don't believe that part at all," said Lennick. "She may've gotten off before he did."

"The indicator went right on up without stopping. My witness'll swear to it. Right to top level, just before Ultrablack."

"Maybe she's under arrest, going for questioning," Lennick parried weakly. "It could *be*, you know."

"Why up there? Goons *carry* Truth Serum. Besides, the witness further states that they didn't look like anything but a couple of chummy dates. Real chummy."

"How about if— Maybe he was *helping* her? Andra's not a bad looker . . . If she turned on the tears—"

"You've been reading your own scripts, friend," said Frank, not unkindly. "This is reality we're dealing with, not never-never-land on film. This Lloyd Bodger, Junior is *not* the boy-most-likely when it comes to helping anti-Hive people. Face it, Bob. Something's up."

"So why, I repeat, aren't we all on our way down the chute costumes, cameras and all?"

"That's the only thing that

doesn't make sense," Frank admitted. "And the only thing that prevents me hiring a sniper to knock her off."

"You'd do that?" said Bob. "To Andra?"

"For the time being, we'll let it ride," Frank decided on the doorstep. "It may be handing ourselves over on a silver salver, but— We'll let it ride. Till we hear from her. And she'd better make it convincing."

"I know she'd tell me the truth— Whatever it is," said Bob, then regretted his rhetorical lapse into doubt. But Frank let it pass, and simply said, with a fleeting smile of compassion, "If I were you, I'd take that Goon's advice, from yesterday when Andra was carted off: Get engaged to somebody else."

"I want to talk to her," Bob insisted.

"If it was your neck, fine. Talk. But it's all our necks. I can't risk it."

"You could fix it, Frank. You could find out where she is, a way to get there. Come along, even, so I don't fumble the ball. Please, Frank? I've got to know . . ."

"Bob, if you knew what you were asking—!" Then the taut, painful set of his friend's features cracked away some of his veneer, and he slumped wearily against the jamb, fiddling with that button again. "So maybe

insanity's catching, or something," he said after a pause.

"You'll help me?"

"I'm not absolutely sure I can, Bob. But— Tell you what . . . Buzz me about nine tonight. I might have an idea."

"Thanks," Bob said. "You're — You're a nice guy, Frank."

Frank turned and walked across the anteroom and out, without replying. Robert Lennick settled back in the swivel chair again, this time not at all relaxed.

CHAPTER 8

NOW, in this scene, sir, you're instructing the Temples through the Speaksters, in your capacity as Prime Speakster," Robert Lennick was explaining, as Frederic Stanton nodded over the pages of script.

Frank, the director, stood by impatiently while his boss explained the setup of the scene they were to shoot.

"I think I understand," Stanton said finally. "Where do I go, now?" An aide led the President toward the waiting set. When he was out of earshot, Frank inclined his head toward Lennick, and whispered, "Never mind buzzing me tonight, Bob. Meet me here, at your office, just before Ultrablack."

"Before Ultrablack?!" Lennick said, aghast. "How will we—?"

"Leave it to me, okay?" said Frank, impatiently. "I'll get you to Andra, wherever she is. I want to see her myself."

Lennick could only stand stupefied as the tall, angular form of the director moved off toward the waiting cameras and crew. Then he grunted in frustration and turned back toward his office. The presence of Stanton made his mind return to the day before, when Andra was captured by the Goons, and it bothered him to dwell on it. An accident. A stupid accident on the set. She'd entered to do her scene, had caught her foot on a hidden guy-wire, and had fallen, still holding the tray of drinks she'd been supposed to serve to her co-stars. And the ragged edge of a shattered goblet had raked across her forearm. Not deep, not at all. Just a long, blood-oozing scratch. The Goons had been there almost on the instant, commandeering her Voteplate, taking her off for "treatment." And she'd looked to him for help, help he could not give, dared not give. And when she saw she was suddenly friendless— She'd broken and run. The Goons hadn't expected such a reaction. Before they could relay the situation to the Brain and get their instructions, Andra had dodged out by a corridor too narrow for them to follow, in all their ponderous

girth and height, and had vanished completely. Later that day, a Goon Squad had come to the studio and widened the corridor, and one other like it, to preclude such a thing ever occurring again.

Lennick was worried at Andra's not contacting him. She might think he couldn't be trusted, the way he'd let the Goons take her. But what did she expect a man to do against armed Goons? She'd only have had the dubious pleasure of seeing him dance to death with a hideous smile on his face, while a Snapper Beam broke his spine in two.

It made Lennick's head hurt to think about it, so when he got to his office, he started reading some new scripts. In a society where the possession of medicine is a crime, it didn't pay to have a headache. Or to let on you had one. But he couldn't erase the look he'd seen in her eyes when they were taking her away.

CHAPTER 9

ARRIVING at the door to Grace Horton's Unit, Lloyd paused with his finger not quite pressing the bell. "This won't be pleasant," he warned. "I've never done anything like this before—getting involved with you, I mean—and I don't think Grace is going to like it. I can't much blame her, either."

He stopped as the door opened.

Grace Horton stood there, clad only in a fragile garment of light silk, her upturned face warm and eager. Beyond her, Lloyd saw the tray with a bottle, ice, and two glasses. There was soft music playing from somewhere in the Unit. He felt his face go red.

"Grace—I want you to meet Andra, Andra Corby."

Grace looked past him for the first time, and saw the other woman. A tiny spasmodic reaction tightened her face and some of the color drained away. Then she said, with rigid composure, "Come in. Come in, won't you?" Unconsciously, she held the folds of her garment tightly at the throat with one hand, as if to make her covering more substantial, as she stepped aside to let them pass.

"Excuse me," she blurted suddenly, after shutting the door, and rushed into her bedroom. The music emanating from there cut off, abruptly, and then Grace reappeared in the doorway, her lips curled in a smile that would not quite come off. "I thought—I thought you'd miss the lift," she said, in an obvious extemporization that was embarrassing to all three persons. "That's why I'm—not quite dressed, yet. I thought I'd be ready after one, when you—" Her eyes fell on the tray, with its solitary preparation for two, and her voice

choked off in the middle of a syllable.

Then she took a breath, walked into the parlor, and sat down gracefully on the arm of the sofa. "Well," she said brightly "*now* what'll we lie about?!"

"I'm so very sorry, Grace," Lloyd said contritely. "I . . . I would've *told* you Andra was coming, if I'd known. We only decided after I'd hung up—"

Grace's eyebrows rose just a fraction. "Andra was at your home when I called?" She rose, suddenly. "I think I'd better get another glass from the kitchen. I have the feeling we're all of us going to need strength."

Lloyd and Andra looked at one another, then sat gloomily down in armchairs deliberately far apart, and waited for Grace's return. When she came back with the third glass, she was a bit more composed.

"Now," said Grace, after draining half her glass, "we can talk."

There was a silence, then Lloyd broke it, awkwardly, with, "You said—You wanted to see me here, right away."

"I called you about the Temple Service last night, Lloyd—I see by your face that you *do* know something about it. Good. Maybe you can tell me what— Don't look so shaken."

"I— Okay. You caught me off-balance, I guess."

"I must have. You look like you were just kicked in the stomach. Well, then, tell me: What happened last night?"

"How did you know *anything* happened?" Lloyd asked.

"A call from the top level this morning. I was warned not to attend on the wrong night in the future, and told I was being let off the hook—though they phrased it more politely, of course—because I was engaged to the son of the Secondary Speakster."

"Did you—? What did you say? To their call?" Lloyd asked, knotting up inside.

Grace folded her arms and leaned back. "I'm no dope, Lloyd. I knew you had my Voteplate, and were bringing it to me last night. That is—" she interjected with chagrin "*—I thought* you'd be over last night with it. When you didn't come, and I got *this* call, from top level, I kind of figured you were in dutch, somehow, and played along. I apologized for my error, and promised it wouldn't happen again—I see, by the way you two just let your breaths out, that I did the right thing . . . Or *did* I? I take it Andra was the one who used my plate?" Lloyd nodded, miserably.

GRACE thought this over, watching the two of them, then leaned forward and touched Lloyd's fingers where they

curled tightly around the end of the chair arm. "Apparently, I have salvaged everybody's chestnuts. Would it be asking too much if I wondered what the hell my reasons were?"

"I'll explain," Lloyd said. "That is, as best I can. My motivations are still a bit obscure even to myself."

Grace flicked a glance at Andra, sitting small and lovely and feminine in the chair. "*Are they!*" she said, a spark of intuition putting her almost with complete accuracy ahead of Lloyd's still-untold tale. "Maybe I can figure them out for you after I hear your story, then."

"Okay, Grace," Lloyd said gratefully, missing her inflection. He proceeded to tell her the story, from the time he'd gone to the Temple up until the present moment, eliding only the fact that Andra had spent the night in his room. He used the phrase "up at my Unit" and hoped it wouldn't be proved any deeper than that. When he'd finished, Grace looked dazed.

"You mean— You *believe* all that, Lloyd?" she said. "I used to have great respect for your sanity, but— This thing about no hospitals, about bumping Off the Kinsmen to keep the population level down— It's crazy, Lloyd. Look, your father's one jump from the Presidency. Has he ever, in all the years of your

life, even *hinted* such a thing to you?"

"No, of course not, but—"

"Yet you take the word of a fugitive, an obvious mental case who doesn't know what's good for her—!"

"May I say something in my defense?!" Andra protested.

"You may not," said Grace, then turned back to Lloyd as though Andra had ceased to exist anymore. "How could a man with your intelligence—"

"Hold it!" Lloyd snapped. "Hold it right there. I'm not a complete fool, Grace. Sure I had doubts. But there are some things Andra said that bother me. And I thought up a few puzzles myself. Like war. Casualties in battle account for a high rate of the deaths reported in the Hive, right? So it occurred to me— How come we're not using the *Goons* to fight in the war? They're indestructible, they're armed with our most potent weapons— Yet we let men and boys be shipped out of here to fight. It doesn't make sense."

"Of course it does!" Grace retorted. "You think that question never occurred to anyone but you, Lloyd Bodger? We don't use *Goons* in war for the same reason they didn't use atomic weapons after the Second World War of last century: The *other* side has them, and might fight back with them."

"But—So *what?*!" Lloyd exploded. "What's the difference if our people are killed by other soldier's bullets or by enemy *Goons?*"

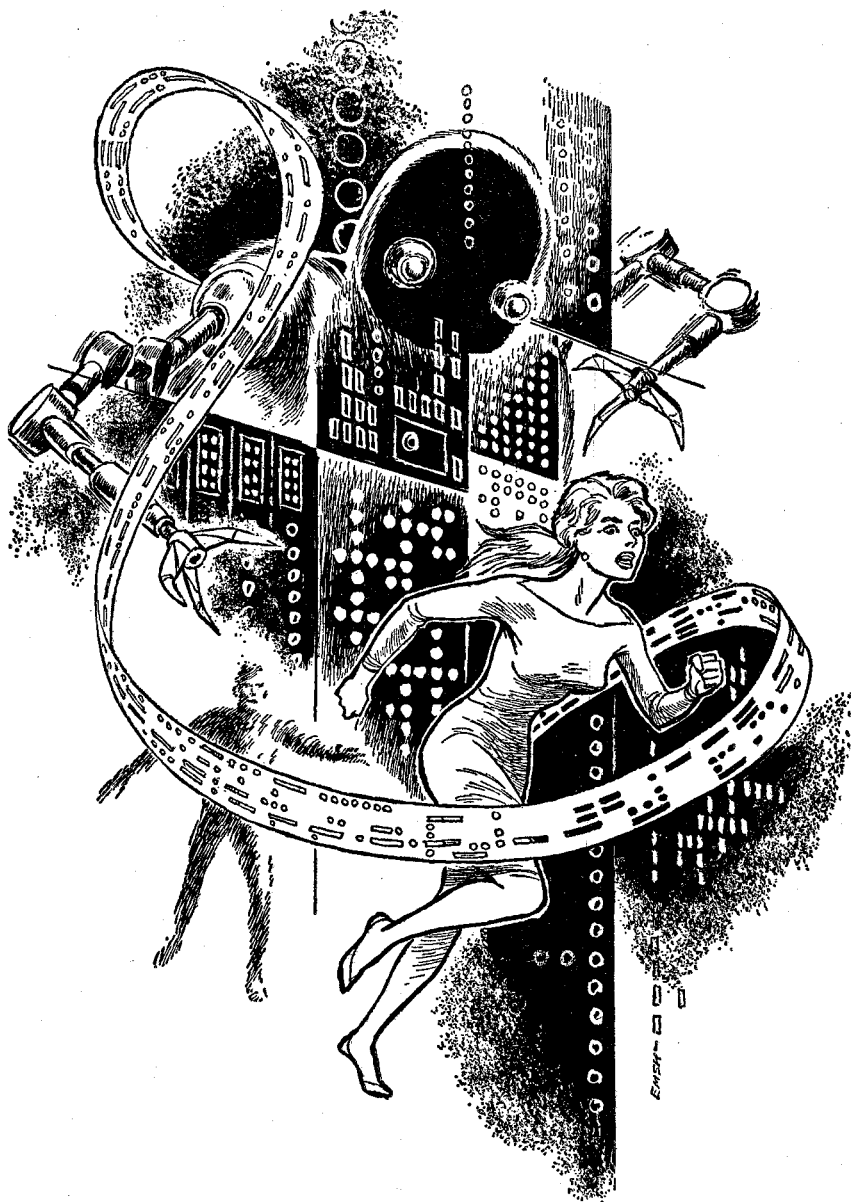
"There's—There's *less* slaughter this way," Grace said, with an intensity that sounded lame even to her.

"All right, we'll let that part go," Lloyd said, in no mental shape for argument. "There are other things—"

"Forget them," Grace said, vehemently. "Whatever your reasons, or reasoning, last night, you have another problem to face: What are you going to do with this girl? The longer you stick with her, the slimmer your excuses will sound when she's caught. In fact, the only hope you have is to turn her in, right now, and pray your Readjustment isn't too painful."

"But don't you see, Grace—!" Lloyd blurted. "What if she's *right?*! On that chance, no matter how silly you think her theory is—a theory that has led others to join her movement, remember—do I dare take the *risk* of turning her in?"

Grace stared at him and digested this aspect of the situation slowly. "I—I guess it *would* be kind of late, when the top level sent me the report that your Readjustment hadn't taken, or something, to say 'Well, he told me so!.'"



The door chimes pealed, then, startling them all.

"You expecting anyone else?" asked Lloyd.

"No, unless your friend the fugitive was seen coming in here."

As they spoke, Andra had gone to a window and peeked out from behind the curtain. When she turned to face them again, her face was grey with strain and apprehension.

"Lloyd—" she said. "It's your father!"

CHAPTER 10

UNDER the blazing arc-lights on the set, President Stanton played himself to the hilt, nearing the climactic, "Vote for the sake of the Kinsmen! Vote for the freedom of the Temples! Vote for the life of the Hive!" Just as he launched into this most important part of the script, a page boy made his labyrinthine way on tiptoe through the cables and reflectors and sound equipment to the chair of the director, and whispered urgently in his ear. Frank got to his feet immediately.

"Cut!" he called.

Stanton looked up in some surprise, and it was a very baffled cameraman who finally found enough strength to cut off his machine. The set was dead quiet as Stanton arose from behind the prop-desk and looked

in unpleasant speculation at the source of the interruption.

Frank cleared his throat, and said, "I'm sorry. The scene was going well, sir; that isn't why I cut it. You have a phone call, in Mr. Lennick's office."

"I thought it was understood I was not to be disturbed while on the set," said Stanton, still wondering if he should give vent to his feelings of outrage.

"It was, sir. And is. But the call's from your personal secretary, sir. She says it's of the utmost importance."

Stanton hesitated, dropped his script back down onto the desk, then started decisively around the side of the desk toward the director. "She had better be correct," he said darkly, brushing by Frank and the crewmen without apology and vanishing into the corridor that led to Robert Lennick's office. There was a brief silence, then a concerted sigh of relief from the men on the set.

"Shall we wait," one of the crewmen asked Frank, "or shoot around this scene and pick it up later?"

Frank spread his hands. "I don't *know*. I have to be sure he's coming back, first— I'll go find out." He told his staff to relax until his return, then hurried out after the President.

A hundred feet down the corridor, he rounded a turn.

Up ahead he saw Stanton just entering Lennick's office. Then, without hesitation, Frank ducked into a nearby office, his own, and locked the door on the inside. The lowest drawer of his desk had a false bottom. He triggered the release on this, now, and lifted out the small black earphone-set there, setting it dextrously across his head, magnetic speaker directly over his ear. In the hollow of the now-exposed section was a telephone dial. Frank swiftly spun it through the sequence of Lennick's office number, then sat hunched forward over his desk, listening hard. He heard Stanton pick up the phone, and say, "This is Stanton. What is it?"

Madge Benedict, his personal secretary, "It's Lloyd Bodger, Junior. You told me to contact you the instant he got out of line again. Well, he has, but good."

"As bad as the other two?" Stanton queried.

"Worse, much worse, sir. Bad enough to make the other two look good by comparison. He was seen, this afternoon, on Ninety-Three-Level, in the company of Andra Corby, the fugitive from hospitalization. You know, sir, the movie star who was injured on the set yesterday."

Something sparked in Stanton's brain, then, and a hard light of comprehension dawned in his eyes. "Wait— Let me

think . . . Of course! She vanished yesterday from the Temple on Ninety-Five! And Lloyd was there, too. I wonder—" He stopped idle speculation and snapped, "Get me Bodger, quick!"

"His office," Madge told him after a moment on another line, "says he's gone home, and you can—"

"I *know* he's at home!" Stanton growled, "I just left him there. Get him!"

There was a short silence, then she spoke again. "I'm ringing him, sir. I don't think he's at home. No one answers."

"You know what to do as well as I do!" he said impatiently. "Put a tracer on his Voteplate! See where he's gone to."

Another pause, while Madge coded an inquiry and flashed it to the memory circuits of the enormous Brain beneath the Hive, and received the near-instantaneous reply. "Sir," she replied, "he's taken the lift to Ninety-Three-Level. The same place his son was seen."

"That's odd . . . Do you suppose he knows about the Corby girl, too? Or—" Stanton dropped the interrogation; Madge shouldn't be made to think about it. The less she knew, trusted secretary or not, the better. "Skip it," he said abruptly. "Find out for me where they might be going on that level,

their hangouts, haunts, and friends . . .”

Madge found the answers and got back on the line. “Three possible places, sir. Dewey’s Bar and Grill, in Sector Three, Miss Grace Horton’s Unit, and—”

“Lloyd’s fiancée?!” Stanton interjected. “The one who attended the wrong Temple Service last night . . .”

“I believe she did, sir. We sent out a memo—”

“And she got it this morning! Of course!” said Stanton, exultantly. “And phoned Lloyd right afterwards!”

“I don’t follow you, sir—” Madge said, blankly.

“Forget it,” snapped the President. “I have all the information I need. And,” he added, with belated gratitude, “thank you for calling me, Miss Benedict.” He hung up without waiting for her reply.

Huddled over the desk in the dimness of his own office, Frank tore off the earphones, dropped them back into the hollow of the drawer, and re-closed the false bottom. He was out in the corridor again, headed toward Lennick’s office, with seconds to spare when Stanton came out.

“Sir,” Frank said, turning about and falling into step with him on the way back to the set, “I wonder if you’d care to finish the scene, or should we shoot around it?”

“Shoot around it,” Stanton said. “I can’t be bothered with the filming, today. Something’s come up.”

Frank nodded and let his pace slacken, allowing the President to move away from him. After poising on his toes for an undecided second, he whirled and dashed toward Lennick’s office. If young Bodger had been seen with Andra, in the same locale where the elder Bodger was now heading—or had even arrived—there was going to be an explosion. An explosion that might sweep Andra, the Bodgers, and the entire anti-Hive movement with it, when Stanton got the wheels of his office in motion.

CHAPTER 11

AFTER thumbing the doorbell the second time, Bodger shifted his hand toward the inner pocket where he kept his Voteplate. The doors of all Units in the Hive were keyed by the Voteplate of the dweller, through a slot above the knob. As Secondary Speakster, Bodger’s plate could key any door in the Hive save Stanton’s; all doors opened to the President’s Voteplate. Just as his fingers touched the edge of the plate in his pocket, he saw the knob start to turn, and withdrew his hand. The door opened, and his son was standing there.

“Come in, Dad,” Lloyd said,

standing aside. "Grace will join us in a moment."

The elder Bodger's eyes did not miss the fact that the door to the bedroom was closed, as he entered the parlor. This delayed appearance of Grace, coupled with the delay in their response to his ring, confirmed his worst suspicions. He took the seat Lloyd offered him, leaned back without quite relaxing, and came to the point at once.

"Lloyd, you're making trouble. Lots of it. For yourself, and quite possibly for me, too. I don't like it. But before I take any steps, I want to hear your side of it."

Lloyd sat down facing his father, very uncomfortable inside. He didn't want to inadvertently volunteer more information than his father already had. He could think of plenty of things he'd done since the night before, any one of which was damnable; the safest policy was in determining just what, and how much of what, his father knew.

"I'm not sure I follow you, Dad," he said, pleasantly. "What kind of trouble—"

"Don't fence with *me*, young man!" said his father. "Unless you're completely brainless, you know what I—" He was about to expostulate on the disgraceful conduct of the evening before, the matter of Grace's having gone up to top level with his son,

then decided to let that ride until Grace herself was present. Keeping steely control over his emotions, he said, instead, "The Vote last night, Lloyd. Your plate was credited with a *con* Vote. Are you *insane*, Lloyd?! Haven't I told you—!"

Lloyd racked his brain to recall the content of the proposition, but could not. "Maybe I hit the wrong button," he said lamely. "My hand might have slipped."

"The penalty's the same, whatever the basis of your stupid action, and you know it!" his father rasped. "I don't think you are even able to tell me what the proposition *was*, are you!" A look at Lloyd's burning face told him the answer. "I thought not," he said, wearily. "I don't know what I'm going to do with you, son. I've tried to keep you in line—"

The entrance of Grace Horton stopped Bodger's tired lament, and both men rose to their feet.

"It's nice to see you Mr. Bodger. Would— Would you like a drink?" Grace offered, nervously.

"I would not—" he said, then softened his curt reply with, "But thank you, anyway, Grace. Maybe later, after I've had my say." Lloyd and Grace looked at one another in numb apprehension of the unknown, then back at Bodger.

"The son of a prominent man," Bodger began, at last finding his approach-path, "has a great responsibility to his father's good name. The Hive, as you both know, has rigid rules regarding—well—amorous conduct, to employ a euphemism, between unmarried persons. Yet, last night, Lloyd—Grace—the two of you were seen going to top level on the public lift, just before Ultrablack."

A SHORT sound from Grace's chair was the gasp that had sucked itself between her lips as the significance of Bodger's words reached her.

Lloyd, for his part, fought but could not control the hot crimson flood that rushed into his features when he met Grace's hurt gaze.

Bodger, misinterpreting both their reactions according to his own notion of the night before, immediately said, "No need to be afraid. A thing like this is better out in the open. I can understand how two young people in love might—"

"Dad!" Lloyd said abruptly. Bodger halted and waited for his son's words. Lloyd, speaking to his father the words that were actually intended for Grace's ears, said, with deep earnest, "It wasn't like that, Dad. She slept on my bed, with her clothes on. I slept on the rug. We— We just

had to be together, that's all. I've done nothing you should feel ashamed of."

The sudden smile on Grace's face caught at Lloyd's heart.

"That's a help, son," Bodger said, likewise convinced. "To me, at any rate. The point, unfortunately, is that any persons who observed you going up to our Unit with Grace could not be expected to presume the *best*, if you see what I mean?"

"I do, Dad," Lloyd mumbled contritely. "And I wish it had never happened."

"It wouldn't have," Bodger pontificated, "if Grace hadn't gone to the wrong Temple Service. I can see how she might dislike the change in her attendance-period, meaning she'd be unable to attend with you, anymore, but it was the wrong thing to do. If she'd stayed home, none of this would've happened."

The irony of this last statement, while it missed Bodger completely, brought a small, one-syllable burst of laughter from Grace's lips, which she quickly stoppered. Lloyd jumped into the breach swiftly, to distract his father from a dangerous line of conjecture.

"Dad, there was something bothered me last night— In the Temple, I mean, about that fugitive girl?"

"What about her?" said his father, unprepared for the state-

ment to the extent that he made an automatic response without having time to notice he was being diverted.

"The check-up for the girl, Dad. It seemed kind of—I hate to use the word, but it's the only one—*inefficient*, at least to me."

"The girl had no Voteplate," Bodger said, puzzled. "I should think a check of all Voteplates was efficient enough."

"But why not have the Goons check her description, or her fingerprints, or even check for the scar on her arm?" said Lloyd. "It'd be much simpler, and surer."

Bodger shook his head. "Not at all, Lloyd. A Goon, you must remember, doesn't 'see' as we do. Its television lenses are only geared to recognize streets, Units, sectors, and so on, and to tell Goons from Kinsmen. Anything as delicate as actual recognition of a face would involve the building of a Brain greater in mass than the current one. No, Voteplates were the only answer to identification problems; that's half the reason they exist. As to fingerprints— They will serve in identifying an individual, it's true, *if* a person's identity is in doubt. But it takes time, and the fingerprint files are enormous; to do so in trying to locate one person in a full Temple gathering would have taken many hours, and there

was a time element involved. The ensuing Service could not begin until the Temple was emptied. Finally, as to the scar—" Bodger looked decidedly uncomfortable, then sighed and said, "— As son of the Secondary Speakster—and future daughter-in-law, Grace—perhaps it's time you were told a fact that is rather embarrassing to the regime, but all too true: In the Hive, people do not always report injuries. While we do not enjoy this mild form of treason to the planned medical facilities of the Hive, we nevertheless tolerate it, for the simple reason that it's bothersome treating *every* scratch and bruise that occurs, most of which will heal themselves. And so, if we had the Goons check for the girl's scar, we might have found a large number of medical violations among the Kinsmen at the Service. Under that circumstance, we would have to hospitalize everyone; Goons are trained to spot any deviation from a healthy norm beyond a certain degree. It would have been terribly awkward, all around. So the only sure method was—"

BODGER stopped, as though violently stunned. "Lloyd—" Bodger said, his heart hammering with a nameless dread. "I was activating the Temple

Speaksters last night. I gave the warning about the girl to your Temple. I remember distinctly what I said. And I know I made no mention of the type or location of her injury. No mention at all. *How did you know it?!*"

Lloyd's lips worked, but he couldn't bring up a syllable from his constricting lungs. Grace her hands knotted into fists, looked at the carpet, and sat like a marble statue.

Bodger got to his feet, towering over the two of them.

"I'm talking to you, Lloyd. Answer me! How did you know!"

Lloyd's ribs abruptly began to function again, and he drew in what felt like the deepest breath of his life. Then he stood and faced his father, defiantly.

"Because she's here, Dad. Right behind that door! And Andra Corby was the girl in our Unit last night, furthermore. I helped her escape from the Temple, with Grace's Voteplate. Now, what are you going to do about it!?"

Bodger fell back into his chair like a crumpling jointed doll, his face shocked and incredulous. "I don't believe it," he said stiffly, pressing his hands upon the chair arms to halt their trembling. "Lloyd, it's not true!"

The bedroom door opened, then, and Andra came out. When Bodger saw her, something inside him cracked, and he suddenly

ly dropped his face into his hands and just groaned. Lloyd was at his side in an instant.

"Dad," he said, gripping the other man's shoulders, "Dad I *had* to tell you. I've been entangling myself in so many lies since last night— It was the only thing left to do!"

Bodger looked up, wide-eyed with dismay, and shrugged Lloyd's hands away. "Let me think!" he said, hoarsely. "I have to think! Stanton mustn't find this out. I've already covered up for your idiotic Vote, and for your taking Grace—all right, Andra—up to our Unit last night. There has to be a way to prevent your horrible errors being found out. I'll cover, somehow, Lloyd. If I can find a way, I'll cover up, and—"

"Dad—!"

Something in the young man's tone made Bodger stop his frantic raving. He looked into his son's eyes, and saw the question even before Lloyd asked it.

"Why *should* you cover up?"

Bodger grabbed at his shattered self-control, and sat up, stiffly. "I— I don't follow you, son."

"I said," Lloyd repeated sadly, "why *should* you cover up for me? I'll only be hospitalized for Readjustment, won't I? . . . *Won't I!?*"

"Lloyd," Bodger said sickly, getting up and clutching his

son's hands, "you're overwrought, right now, you've been under a strain . . ."

"All the more reason for my hospitalization, then," Lloyd said, with all the relentless cruelty he could muster in the face of his father's ghastly fright.

"No!" Bodger yelled. "You can't go! You don't understand, Lloyd! I can't explain here."

"There's no need to," Lloyd said, suddenly softening and taking his father by the hands to halt their frenetic quavering. "Your attitude has told me all I want to know. Andra was speaking the truth. There *are* no hospitals, no treatment, no Readjustment. Only death."

"Lloyd—!" Bodger said. "If you only knew *why*—"

"We'd *all* like to know why," said Andra, solicitously. "Mr. Bodger, it's no use struggling any more. You have to tell the truth, now, or have your son—and Grace and myself—be destroyed."

"All right," Bodger said. "I will. I'll tell you the whys and wherefores of the Hive. Then maybe you'll—"

"I'm afraid such an extemporaneous educational program is quite impossible," came a voice from the doorway.

FREDRIC STANTON, just removing his Voteplate from the slot in Grace's door, had his

other hand extended toward them. And clutched firmly in his steady grasp was the stubby metal muzzle of a Snapper.

The two men and women stepped backward, slowly, as he advanced into the parlor and shut the door behind him. "I only heard the last few phrases of your conversation, unfortunately," he said. "I think, for the interests of the Hive, that I should hear it all. We'll have to go up to my office, all of us, to get at the truth. I'll have a Goon Squad pick us up, here." He reached for the phone, dialed swiftly, and soon had Madge on the line. He kept the Snapper trained on the group while he spoke, and never took his eyes off them.

"Sir," Madge replied, before he could ring off, "do you think it's wise, bringing Bodger through the streets under guard, I mean?" She sounded greatly concerned. "The Kinsmen—"

Stanton narrowed his eyes appreciatively, and cut her off with, "You're right, of course; it wouldn't do to let public opinion of the regime get any shakier than it is! I can't wait till Ultrablack, however. Start the emergency sirens at once. Allow fifteen minutes for all Kinsmen to clear the streets. Then put on the Emergency Ultrablack."

"Right, sir," Madge said, and hung up.

Stanton smiled, still keeping them covered as he replaced the phone in the cradle. "You'd better be seated," he said congenially.

CHAPTER 12

YOU really believe that *Bodger* is involved in the anti-Hive movement?" Lennick said dubiously. "It doesn't make sense, Frank! Why should the Secondary—"

"All I know," Frank said determinedly, "is that Stanton was shaken by the news of young Bodger and Andra. It puts me right back on Andra's team, all at once. If Stanton was in the dark, then it's very doubtful that Andra's done anything to betray the movement; the greater likelihood is that she's pulled Junior *our* way."

Lennick frowned doubtfully. "Andra's an attractive girl, Frank, but—"

"Everybody isn't pulled into the movement like you were, Bob. Sex appeal has its uses, but there's also a thing known as intelligence. Bodger and his son are no dopes. If she convinced them—"

"Why *should* she!?" Lennick said angrily. "Have to convince *them*, I mean! Didn't they, of all people, *know*?"

Frank stood there with his mouth open, blinking. Then he sat down and stared at the pro-

ducer, dazed. "I must be getting soft-headed," he murmured after a short hiatus. "Of course they must know . . . Still—?" He looked helplessly to Lennick for assistance.

"I know; it doesn't make sense," Lennick nodded. "The only thing to be done is to *find* Andra, I guess, and ask her the answers. Conjecture is only taking us in circles."

Frank spoke tautly, his pent-up frustration making his words strained and painful. "Excepting that, as long as Andra's in Grace Horton's sector, we can't go after her. That's not one of the permitted areas on my Vote-plate. I'd hate to be caught loitering in that area when the Goons show up for Andra. When they make an arrest, they check on everybody. If only this had occurred later, today, near Ultrablack—"

"Why do you keep stressing Ultrablack?" Lennick asked. "I still haven't even figured out why I was to meet you here tonight just before it was turned on. We'd really be helpless then."

"Bob," Frank said gently, "this is nothing personal, but—Well, when the movement gets a new member, we don't just lay out all our schemes on a red carpet for him. There's a trial period for all new members. You've been on probation for a couple of months, now. The less you

know of our plans, our memberships, the less you could spill if you were a plant."

Lennick grinned wryly and shook his head. "I know. That was a real bone of contention between Andra and myself when we'd been engaged nearly six weeks. A wife can't keep secret meetings from her husband very well; he may suspect her outings are something even worse. When I finally pressed her about broken dates, and times she couldn't be reached, and she told me about the movement, I was pretty miffed she didn't trust me with all she knew."

"She couldn't, Bob, you know that. The information wasn't hers to give out, without permission of the rest of us. We could not put our necks in a noose because Andra adores your big brown eyes."

"I'm surprised you're still speaking to me, after yesterday," Lennick said with chagrin.

"Bob, you did what any of us could have done: Nothing. One man can't fight off a Goon Squad. We would have lost *two* members, instead of just Andra, if you'd put up a fuss."

"But about Ultrablack," Bob said, frowning. "I know you people have meetings after Light-of-Day goes off. *How* you do it is beyond me, with the streets alive with Goons, and darkness everywhere, even indoors."

IF there were a chance of rescuing Andra when tonight's Ultrablack came on, I'd tell you, Bob," Frank said sincerely. "It'd give you the chance you didn't have yesterday to do something for her. I think you can be trusted. I trusted you enough, just now, to tell you about the tapped phone."

"You had to," Lennick said with a shrug. "Or else I'd be leery about believing you knew so much about Stanton's private call."

"We set that up ever since Stanton started appearing in our Hive-located scripts. He's always so busy, keeping in touch with his office between takes, that we've kept one jump ahead of the Goons, on occasion. It must drive him nuts, wondering about the raids that never came off."

Lennick got to his feet. "I wish we didn't have to just *sit* here this way! At this very moment, Andra may be still uncaptured. If she could be warned—"

"She could, if top-level privilege didn't entitle young Bodger's fiancée to an unlisted number. You can go up there if you want, but— I know too much about the movement to risk it. If you're caught, it's unimportant—insofar as the sum of your knowledge, I mean. But I don't dare let myself be taken."

Frank paused, and cocked his

head, listening. Lennick, seeing him, did the same. A keening wail penetrated into the depths of the office. "Sirens!" Frank said. "It means there'll be an emergency Ultrablack in fifteen minutes. Or even less, if we did not hear them from the very beginning . . ."

"You think it has to do with Andra?" asked Lennick.

"No telling," said Frank. "And no telling how long this Ultrablack is for. At normal Ultrablack, I can count on a definite number of hours, but—" He hesitated, then clapped Lennick on the shoulder and said, "Come on, Bob! This may be the chance we were looking for!"

The producer followed him, bewildered, out of the office and down the corridor toward the set. Just inside the set, where the siren-alerted crew members were grabbing their gear together in preparation for swift flight, Frank pulled Bob aside and led him to a door flanking the corridor entrance. "This way," he said, shoving the other man inside and following.

"To the prop room?" Lennick said wonderingly, his mind a pastiche of envisioned secret panels, inter-level tunnels and the like. Frank kept moving down the short hall without replying, so Lennick could only tag impatiently after him, his curiosity at its ultimate. Then

they were in the high, barn-like gloom of the prop room, a fantastic collage of canvas backdrops, teeter-piled furniture, swords, pistols, fake-currency stacks, ropes, saddles, bows, arrows, and other oddments of the trade.

LENNICK found his bewilderment growing as Frank pushed aside a stack of dusty chairs and then slid aside a tall desert-sky backdrop on oiled rollers. For a horrible instant, Lennick recoiled, his flesh going icy with unthinking fright. Then he relaxed and gave a shiver of relief. "Damn those things!" he grunted. "I forgot we had them stored back here . . ." Then he looked up and met Frank's gaze, and comprehension dawned on him. "You mean— *Them*!?"

"There's a panel in the back, where the operator can slide in to run the controls," Frank said. "It'll hold two, if you don't mind crowding."

"Good grief!" Lennick gasped. "I should have guessed!"

"Never mind the self-recriminations," Frank said. "Help me roll this thing out so we can get inside it."

Lennick nodded, and took hold of the jointed metal arm on one side, as Frank did the same on the other. Together, they wheeled the massive torso of the prop-Goon toward the center of the

room. As Frank located and opened the neatly disguised panel, Lennick shook his head in doubt.

"There's no force-field, Frank," he said uneasily, "and once Ultrablack sets in—"

"Unlatch the door to the street," Frank said testily, "and stop asking so many questions." As Lennick hurried to comply, Frank added, with less irritation, "The absent forcefield's the *reason* we use Goons only after Ultrablack. A Goon won't notice the difference, since it only determines identities by shape, but a Kinsman would, instantly, as you just did. There are no Kinsmen out after Ultrablack, so that's the safe time for us. As for your other worry, about how we'll see after Ultrablack, Ultrablack is only the jamming of the visible spectrum by the radiation of inverted light; the compression and rarefaction phases of the light waves are plugged, dovetailed into, by the opposing phases of inverted light. Goons," he said, depressing a switch beside a small cathode-screen inside the hollow body, "see by cutting off the sensitivity of their lenses to light or inverted light, it doesn't matter which. Then the hive is bright as daylight to them."

Lennick clambered up beside him and helped Frank dog the metal panel shut. Side by side,

hunched over the pale blue glow of the screen, they watched the interior of the prop room through the lens-eyes of their grotesque conveyance. When the sirens halted, Ultrablack swept the room from their ken like a velvet curtain. Then Frank turned a dial, and the room reappeared on the screen, like a negative image, with white for black, and vice-versa.

"Now we can go," Frank said, releasing a brake. The prop-Goon began to roll ponderously toward the door to the street, carrying its two perspiring conspirators. "I only wish," Frank said tensely, guiding their movement out into the Kinsmen-deserted street of the sector, "that this thing had Snapper-Beams too. But I guess an underground movement can't have everything."

CHAPTER 13

THE four prisoners sat glumly looking at the impenetrable squares of darkness outside Grace Horton's windows, awaiting the arrival of the Goon Squad. Madge Benedict, without needing to be told, had kept Ultrablack from occurring in the Unit; it was the only area of visible light in the entire nine cubic miles of the Hive. Stanton, his weapon never wavering, lolled against the wall of Grace's parlor, watching their discom-

future with amusement. Of all the group, Andra's pallor was the worst, and Stanton noted this fact with relish.

"I don't expect to glean much from the minds of the others," he said, addressing her directly, "but yours must be a veritable treasure trove of interesting data."

"I don't know why you should think so," Andra said, knowing all the while that fabrication was futile; five minutes under truth serum would prove the President's contention beyond debate. "I'm only one small cog in a wheel greater than your whole Goomdom of force!"

"You almost convince me," Stanton said. "But— No matter. I'll know the truth in a few more minutes."

"And then what?" asked Grace. "What happens to us once you've picked our brains of knowledge? If it's death—"

"Grace—" Lloyd said warningly, taking her arm. She turned on him.

"Darling, if we're to die in any event, let's die now! At least we'll have the satisfaction that a hundred other people aren't dying afterward, because of us!"

"She's right, Fred," Bodger said, smiling for the first time since his arrival at Grace's Unit. "If you kill us now, you'll never find anything out. At least our lives will have accomplished

something, if only continued secrecy about the movement."

"A Snapper Beam needn't kill, if used briefly enough," Stanton said mildly. "If you four prefer dancing an agonized quadrille until the arrival of the squad, you have only to come an inch closer. In fact, unless you return to your chairs at once, I may just do it anyhow, for my own diversion."

"A Snapper Beam," said Bodger, "is effective only so long as it's held upon its victim. Can you play yours four ways at once, Fred? Because, while you're gunning any one of us down, three will be diving for your throat!"

STANTON, before Bodger's statement could bring the others in a unified wave against him, pointed the muzzle of the Snapper directly at the man's chest and pressed the firing stud. A whine of power came from the weapon as the invisible forces lashed out.

And Bodger took two strides forward and smashed his fist into Stanton's face. The President's head snapped back with the unexpected blow, and cracked sharply against the wall. Then, the weapon falling from his limp fingers, he slid to the floor and collapsed in an untidy heap.

Bodger, stumbling back from the fallen body, sagged into a

chair, gasping. Lloyd sprang to his side, dropped to one knee beside the chair, staring in unbelief at the shaken man. "Dad!" he blurted, in dazed joy. "You're alive! You're all right!"

"No . . ." Bodger said, his eyes bulging as he shook his head, his lips thickening over words that were becoming difficult to formulate. "No, Lloyd. I'm— sicker than I thought."

"What are you talking about, Dad! You just took a dose of power that would've destroyed a healthy human nervous system, and came *through* it! How can you say—"

"Lloyd!" Bodger rasped, clutching his son's arm. "Don't you see? I don't—don't *have* a human nervous system, anymore. The thing I've always feared has happened. I—" He coughed, and his skin took on a sickly bluish tinge for a moment, then flushed into a ruddier tone as he took a breath and held himself in rigid control. "The— The Brain. You . . . must go to the Brain, Lloyd. I— Can't talk more . . . ask it . . . why is the Hive . . ." His voice trailed off, and his eyes closed.

"Dad," Lloyd said, shaking his father by the shoulders. "Why is the Hive *what*?! Tell me!"

His father opened his eyes and stared unseeing beyond his son. His lips, flecked with spume, worked silently, then he gurgled,

"M-medicine . . . bathroom . . . behind mirror . . . I n-need—" His collapse this time was total, his head hanging limply with chin on chest, his arms sliding over the sides of the chair until his wrists touched the carpet.

A thunderous pounding upon the front door brought Lloyd and the two women up short, and they stood frozen with dread as the insistent sound continued. The inner surface of the door was shaking with the blows. ". . . Goons?" whimpered Grace. "What'll we do if it's the Goons?"

"Stanton's Voteplate!" Andra snapped. "Lloyd, take it, quick, out of his pocket!" Lloyd caught her meaning instantly, and hurried to obey. "Grace, count ten, then open the door. We can't delay longer than that. Lloyd, think fast, and think smart! We're all in your hands, now!"

Lloyd, the plate in his hand, shoved his own into Stanton's pocket and straightened up. "Let them in, Grace," he commanded. "Then both of you keep still and let me talk!"

GRACE unbolted the door and stepped back. The six metal bodies of the Goon Squad rumbled loudly as they crossed over the sill and came to a halt before the trio. The Goon in the forefront of the group, swiveling its

glittering telenses over them, spoke in its cold, emotionless voice, "President Stanton."

Lloyd stepped forward and handed over the Voteplate. The eight-foot metal creature took it, slipped it into its chest slot and paused; then returned the plate.

"Correct," it said. "Orders."

"Miss Madge Benedict, of my office, to be taken into custody at once, and held incommunicado," said Lloyd, figuring Stanton would be helpless with no contact at top level, so long as Ultrablack prevented his leaving the unit.

The Goon stood silently as this information was relayed to the Brain and thence to the Goon Squad nearest Stanton's office. "Accomplished," it said flatly, after a minute, its dull grey force-field pulsating with incredible energies. "Orders."

"Secondary Speakster Bodger—the man in the chair—to be taken," Lloyd flashed a glance at Grace, who nodded, "along with this woman on my right, to his Unit on Hundred-Level, Unit B, and left there without supervision, by all but one of your squad."

"Orders."

"One of you will escort me and this woman on my left to the Brain, in Sub-Level Three, immediately."

"Orders."

"All orders conveyed," said Lloyd.

CHAPTER 14

KNOWING only the sector in which Andra had been seen with Lloyd, but not having access to Grace's address or phone number, Lennick and Frank, in the prop-Goon, arrived at her Unit many minutes after the Goon Squad had left. They found it by the simple expedient of noting—in their white-for-black cathode screen—the one Unit from whose windows blackness was trying to pour. That meant Light-of-Day was still functioning in that particular Unit, and that in turn meant only the presence of higher-ups.

The door to the Unit lay wide open, but Frank didn't dare roll inside. His conveyance's lack of a force-field would be readily apparent in such close quarters. He halted, instead, a few yards along the side of the Unit, told Bob where the door lay from them, then cut off his motor and the cathode screen. Ultrablack fell about them like a velvet all.

Bob, following Frank, felt his way out into the near-palpable darkness, found the wall against his fingers, and edged along beside it, fingers feeling for the doorway. A hand upon his chest stopped him, and he waited.

Frank, holding Bob back, leaned carefully toward the open doorway his fingers had just touched, not daring to show any more of himself than he had to

to whomever might be inside the Unit. Then, swiftly, he leaned his head out of Ultrablack and blinked at the parlor before him. He saw no one. He closed his fingers upon the front of Bob's shirt, gave a quick tug on it, then let go and stepped into the room. A moment later, Bob was there beside him, squinting against the bright bluish Light-of-Day.

"Maybe it's the wrong Unit," Bob offered. "A malfunction in the Hive mechanism *might* keep this place from Ul—" He shut up and gripped Frank's arm. "Stanton!" he said, pointing beyond the sofa. Then Frank saw the President. Cautiously, the two men approached the still, silent figure and stared down at him.

"What do you suppose happened?!" Bob said, shakily. "Do you think Andra had something to do with this?"

Frank Shawn scratched his head. "You got me. All I can figure is—if Stanton's in a fix like this—he may not have been able to get her picked up. This tableau has the earmarks of turned tables, if you ask me."

"Do we dare waken him and find out?" Bob said, keeping his voice to a library-whisper.

"Not as long as Ultrablack's on. We'd have a hell of a time explaining how we got here," said Frank, shaking his head. He

turned to look at Stanton again, and the blood froze in his veins. Stanton's eyes were open, and he was staring at the two of them with glaring hate.

"How *did* you get here, Kinsman Shawn?!" he demanded. "And you, Kinsman Lennick!" Stanton lifted his head from the floor, awkwardly, and tried to look around. "Bodger! Where is he?" he said, shaken by a sudden return of memory.

"I've got to get to that phone! They're probably on their way to my office right this minute! If they take control—" He choked on the word and lay still, seeing the Snapper—his own—that Frank now leveled at him. "I suppose the two of you know this is high treason?" he said wearily. He lay there fuming at his enforced impotence.

Bob looked at Frank. "What'll we *do*?"

"I wish I knew!" Frank muttered. "If we knew what had happened, where the others have gone— But we don't, so there's no followup there . . . Still, we can't leave Stanton here, now that he's seen us, or it's our necks when he gets free."

"We—" Bob said, hesitantly. "We could make sure he *would* not be able to do anything, later . . ." He let his voice trail off, Frank caught his meaning after an instant's puzzled frown, and went ashen.

"In cold blood, just like that?" he said softly.

"I don't like it any more than you, Frank . . . But—" Bob spread his hands helplessly. "What choice do we have? If we're caught—you especially—the whole movement is doomed." He stood silent, waiting for his answer.

Frank nodded, abruptly. "You're right. It has to be done." Stanton looked from the face of one man to the other, his tongue licking suddenly dry lips.

"Bob— Frank—" Stanton spoke from the floor, his tone man. You wouldn't kill me, weak with dread. "I'm an old man. You wouldn't kill me, would you? I'll do anything—*Forget* I've seen you here, even . . . anything . . . only please don't—!"

LISTEN, Frank," Bob said, trembling. "You heard what Stanton said: They've gone to his office. Take the Goon and go after them. I'll stay here with Stanton. If everything works out about the revolt— Fine. If it doesn't— Call me, here. The number's on the phone base. If the balloon goes up— I'll kill Stanton, then. But unless it does— I can't . . ."

"Okay," Frank said, coming to a swift decision. He noted Grace's number, then went toward the Ultrablack beyond the

door. At the threshold, he turned. "I may not get the chance to phone," he said. "If things go wrong, I mean. Give me half an hour. If I haven't called by then—" He avoided looking at Stanton's perspiring face. "Go ahead."

Bob reached out and took the Snapper. "Good luck," he said. Frank nodded wordlessly, and stepped out into the blackness. In another minute, Bob heard the rumble of the prop-Goon's motors, and then the whirl of its wheels on the pavement outside. When it died in the distance, he looked down at his prisoner.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said, "really sorry. It was the only thing to do, while he was here. I knew he wouldn't go through with it. Killing you, I mean." He stooped and helped him up.

"What if he'd agreed!?" Stanton complained, taking his weapon and pocketing it.

Bob looked up, surprised. "I'd have had to kill him, of course. Without your permission, I didn't dare let on in front of him. I thought you'd want me in a position of trust, still. Frank won't alert any other members of the movement against me, this way."

Stanton grunted noncommittally at the statement, and got to his feet. Then he stepped to the phone and dialled Madge Benedict's number. The receiver

shrilled in his ear, over and over, as the phone in her office rang. He waited for six rings, then hung up, his face thoughtful.

"Madge is never supposed to leave the phone without my permission during an emergency. Something's happened. They may be up there already . . . They *must* be up there already!"

"What can we *do*?" Bob blurted, frightened. "Once they gain control of the Speaksters—"

"That takes time," Stanton said. "They'll have to lift Ultrablack, flash an emergency call to the Temples on the Proposition Screens, and wait until the Kinsmen have arrived to make their announcements. But there's a way to stop them. The Goons. And they're controlled by the Brain— Or by whomever is at the controls of the Brain!" he added with a smile that sent gooseflesh along Lennick's back.

"But how can we get there in Ultrablack?" Bob asked. "If we wait for them to turn it on, we won't have much time before the Kinsmen get to the Temples . . ." He stopped when he saw what Stanton was doing. The President, from an inner pocket of his coat, had taken a sort of transparent grey oval of some plastic material, and was fitting it before his eyes by means of an elastic strap. When it was in place, he could just barely see the President's balefully glaring

eyes. "I didn't know such a thing existed," he said, knowing what the eyeshield was for, suddenly.

"Few people do," said Stanton. "Come on, you young fool! Take my arm and let's get moving!"

Bob took a firm grip upon the President's sleeve, and then the two of them stepped out into Ultrablack. Despite his youth, Bob had a difficult time keeping up with the other man. Stanton was driven by extremely vengeful fires.

CHAPTER 15

THE end of the line for the lift was Sub-Level One, just beneath the granite soil on which the Hive rested. Lloyd and Andra emerged there, keeping close to their towering metal guide. Lloyd had only been to the Brain a few times, with his father. He knew very little about its operation. What he did know would have to suffice.

There was a sharp, hard click, as the Goon between them sprouted neat metal cogs on its wheels. Then, the cogs fitting neatly along tread and riser, it guided them down the steep staircase to Sub-Level Two. This level was smaller than any in the Hive itself. A mere twenty-five feet in height, it was filled completely with concrete-and-lead, save for the ten-by-ten-foot space

to which the stairs had led them. In the center of this space was a circular door, on the floor near their feet. The Goon could come no further.

"Orders," it said dispassionately, after lifting the heavy door with one hand and guiding Lloyd to the brink of the gaping hole with the other.

"Return to your squad, and forget where you have brought us."

"Orders."

"All orders conveyed."

The Goon rattled off into the darkness, and Lloyd heard it begin to ascend the stairs once more. He felt for, and found, Andra's arm, and drew her to him. "Careful, now," he cautioned her. The Brain-control chamber is right under us. We have a hundred-foot climb down a steel ladder, now."

"But I can't see—!" Andra said, holding back.

"There's Light-of-Day below," Lloyd said. "As soon as we start into the chamber, we'll be able to see. Ultrablack never goes on in the Brain." He held her hand tightly as he felt for the top rung with his toe. "Okay, now, I'm starting down. Come a little closer, and take your weight off one leg. I'll guide that foot to the top rung."

Andra caught herself nodding in the blackness, and said "All right," aloud. She heard Lloyd's

feet clumping onto something that clanged dully, and then his hand was taking her gently by the ankle. She let him place her foot on the rung, then gave him a moment to begin his own descent before she followed after him. Three steps down, and she was in bright Light-of-Day, on a shiny tubular ladder whose base looked impossibly far below her. She shut her eyes and clung tightly to the sides of the ladder, then, taking step by cautious step downwards. The rungs, she'd noted, were just about a foot apart. She'd count to one hundred, and if she hadn't reached the bottom by then, she would scream.

When she was just enumerating ninety-seven, Lloyd's hands took her by the waist, and lifted her to the floor. She opened her eyes, disengaged his hands from her body, and then looked around in awe.

TIER upon tier of lightweight metal scaffolding rose on all sides of a twenty-foot-square area of flooring. Riveted across the angles of the scaffolding were coils and condensers, insulators and sparking forks of synaptic wiring, whirling cams and clattering selectors, banks of glowing lights that danced on random pattern, deepset labyrinthine nests of wire that glowed a brilliant orange, then

faded to dull grey, then glowed again, accompanied by a rising and falling hum of urgent power.

As Andra's eyes followed the amazing array from ceiling to floor, she was shocked to see that the flooring was not really the solid thing she had supposed; it was, rather, a taut network of heavy cable, really nothing more than a glorified window screen, through the interstices of which she caught a vertiginous glimpse of more areas of bright electrical light, dropping away below her feet to incredible distances.

"How big is the Brain—?" she said to Lloyd, pulling her eyes from the terror of the empty depths between the frameworks beneath the cable-floor.

"A cubic mile," Lloyd said. "It's self-oiling, self-repairing, self-replacing. And in it are stored all the memories of the Hive from the day it was built."

He led her across the lattice-work flooring to a large flat panel, on which a number of lights shone evenly, without change in their asymmetrical pattern. Lloyd slid open a flat panel half-way down the face of this instrument, and removed a flexible metal band. He sat in the only chair in the chamber, directly before the open panel, and began adjusting the band about the circumference of his head. Andra eyed the metal band and

the wires that led from it back into the light-strewn panel with misgivings.

"What are you going to do, Lloyd?"

"Ask the Brain for some answers," he said. Lloyd flipped open the lid of a small keyboard, and started to type, carefully: *What is the Hive?*

When he'd completed his question, he steadied himself in the chair, closed his eyes, and pressed a small button at the side of the exposed keyboard. Andra took a step back, quite startled as Lloyd stiffened in the chair, his face twitching. Before his closed eyes, the lights on the panel began to flicker on and off, dancing with incredible intricacy, and a weird, high-pitched tootling and tweetling began to echo through the chamber, through the scaffolding, through the entire mechanism of the great Brain. Andra jammed her hands to her ears to shut out the nerve-plucking noise. And then the lights blinked, held steady, and the cacophony of the electronic mind cut off. Lloyd opened his eyes.

"Well?" Andra said, going to him. "What happened?"

"It answered my question!" he said, with bitter disgust. "Told me the population of the Hive, told me it had ten truncated conic tiers, with ten levels in each tier, gave me the names

of its officers, industries and short, just about what *anybody* in the Hive already knows!"

"All *that*," Andra marveled. "So quickly?"

"The Brain doesn't spell it out in words, Andra," Lloyd said ruefully. "It implants the information instantaneously in your mind. When it's implanted, the Brain stops feeding your brain, and you come out of the information-cycle with a new *memory*. Except that, in this case, there was nothing new to learn."

"If only your father had *completed* his instructions."

Lloyd's hands, about to remove the headband while he pondered their dilemma, froze in place, and he grunted in sudden wonder. "You don't suppose," he said, shakily, "that *this* is the question?"

"W-what?" Andra asked, nervous before his excitecent.

"What if the question should be, not *what* is the Hive, but *why* is the Hive!" the young man gasped.

"Do you really think it could give you the *reasons* for the Hive's existence, the absence of hospitals, everything?"

"I don't know," said Lloyd, swiveling in the chair to face the keyboard once more. "But I mean to find out . . ."

He typed, carefully, the words: *Why is the Hive?* Andra

stood and watched, anxiously, as he depressed the starter-button beside the keyboard again. whistlings of the Brain arose in Again the lights and the eerie whistlings of the Brain arose in maddening crescendo all about her, while Lloyd twitched and shuddered, his eyes clamped rigidly closed, in the chair. And then there was calm again, and silence, and the lights ceased their dance.

Lloyd tore off the headband and spun to face Andra. His eyes were wide with shock, and his jaw gaped imbecilically.

"Lloyd!" Andra took him by the shoulders and shook him, her heart thudding painfully at the apprehension in her breast. "Lloyd, what is it! What happened!"

He blinked, shook his head, and then seemed to see her for the first time. His mouth worked, and then he said, "I *know*, Andra! I know what the Hive is all about!"

"It must be terrible, something terrible," she said, frightened at his intensity. "Your face—your eyes—"

"No!" he said. "Not terrible. Awesome, perhaps, and stunning, but not terrible. Sit down, Andra. I'm going to tell you something that will chill you to the bones— And you're going to *like* what you hear."

(Concluded next month)

**As if one mystery of creation weren't enough,
there was the myth of . . .**

the Demi-Urge

By THOMAS M. DISCH

From DIRA IV
To Central Colonial Board

There is intelligent life on Earth. After millenia of life-lessness, intelligence flourishes here with an extravagance of energy that has been a constant amazement to all the members of the survey team. It multiplies and surges to its fulfillment at an exponential rate. Even within the short period of our visit the Terrans have made significant advances. They have filled their small solar system with their own kind and now they are reaching to the stars.

We can no longer keep the existence of our Empire unknown to them.

And (though it is as incredible as $\sqrt{-1}$) the Terrans are slaves! Every page of the survey's report bears witness to it.

Their captors are not alive. They do not, at least, possess the

properties of life as it is known throughout the galaxy. They are—as nearly as a poor analogy can suggest—Machines! Machines cannot live, yet here on Earth machinery has reached a level of sophistication—and autonomy—quite unprecedented. Every spark of Terran life has become victim and bonds slave of the incredible mechanisms. The noblest enterprises of the race are tarnished by this almost symbiotic relation.

Earth reaches to the stars, but it extends mechanical limbs. Earth ponders the universe, but the thoughts are those of a machine.

Unless the Empire acts now to set the Earth free from this strange tyranny, it may be too late. These machines are without utilitarian value. They perform no function which an intelligent being cannot more efficiently perform. Yet they inspire fear, terror, even, I must confess, a

strange compulsion to surrender oneself to them.

The Machines must be destroyed.

If, when you have authorized the liberation of the Terran natives, you would also recall MIRO CIX, our work could only profit. MIRO CIX was in charge of the study of the Machines and he performed this task scrupulously. Now he has surrendered himself to this mechanical plague. His value to the expedition is at an end.

I am enclosing under separate cover his counsel to the Central Board at the insistence of this tedious lunatic. His thesis is, of course, untenable—an affront to every feeling.

* * *

From MIRO CIX
To Central Colonial Board

I have probably been introduced to the deliberations of the Board as a madman, my theory as an act of treason. RRON II of the Advisory Committee, an old acquaintance, may vouch for my sanity. My theory will, I trust, speak for itself.

The "Machines" of which DIRA IV is so fearful present no danger to the galaxy. Their corporeal weakness, the poverty of their minds, the incredible isolation of each form, physically and mentally, from others of its kind, and, most strikingly, their mor-

talities, point to the inadequacy of such beings in a contest of any dimension. This is no problem for the Colonial Board. It is a domestic concern. The life-forms of Earth are already developing a healthy autonomy. Their power was long ago established. As soon as our emissaries have completed their task of education and instructed the Terrans in the advantages of freedom, the Revolution will begin. The tyrants will have no defense against a revolt of their own slaves.

If it is traitorous to express a confidence in the eventual triumph of intelligence, I am a traitor. Having this confidence, I have looked beyond the immediate problem of the liberation of Earth and have been frightened.

The "Machines" of Earth are a threat not to the power of the Empire but to its reason. A threat which the obliteration of the last molecular ribbon of these beings will not erase, for we cannot obliterate the fact that they *did* exist—and what they were.

Although these beings bear a crude resemblance to the machinery manufactured by the Empire, they are not machines. They are autochthonous to Earth, unmanufactured. They are the true Terrans. Moreover, the Terrans whom DIRA IV would liberate are not, in the eyes of their enslavers, intelligent nor yet alive. They are Machines!

We, the entire Galactic Empire, are Machines.

IN the younger regions of the galaxy, a myth persists that life was formed by a Demi-urge, a being intermediary between the All-Knowing and the lower creatures. The existence of man, as the beings of Earth term themselves, makes necessary a serious re-examination of the old tradition.

It is said that man, or beings like man—the Photosynthetics of the Andromeda cluster, the Bristlers of Orc IV—created prosthetic devices for their convenience and, when they tired of their history, breathed their own life into them and died. On Earth the legend is still in process. Many of the lower forms of life familiar throughout the galaxy can be seen on Earth in the primordial character of an appliance. Man regards the highest forms of life (as we know it) as tools—because he made them. How can we deny the superiority of the Creator? How will it feel to know we are nothing but machines?

This is the question that has so unsettled DIRA IV. Recently four of his memory banks have had to be repaired. I don't speak in malice. His dilemma will soon belong to all of us.

And yet I am confident. Man himself has legends of a Demi-urge. We are his equals in this at least. Besides, the physical properties of his being are ordered by the same laws as ours. He is as unconscious of his maker as we so long were of ours.

The final proof of our equality—and the need for such a proof is only too evident—can be had experimentally.

Do not destroy man. Preserve enough specimens for extensive laboratory experiments. Learn how he is put together. Man's chemistry is elaborate but not beyond our better Analysts. At last, refashion man. When we have created these beings ourselves, we will be their unquestionable equals. And creation will be again a mystery.

History demands this of us. I am confident of your decision.

THE END

The 14th Annual Midwestcon will be held June 28, 29 and 30 at the North Plaza Motel, 7911 Reading Road, Cincinnati 37, Ohio. Reservations should be made directly with the motel. All other inquiries should be sent to Donald E. Ford, Box 19-T, RR #2, Wards Corner Road, Loveland, Ohio.

**Suppose you really knew
what everyone was feeling . . .
suppose you had a surefire
way of predicting public re-
action. Wouldn't you wonder,
sometimes, if it could backfire.**

By VANCE SIMONDS

Illustrated by SCHELLINGS

TELEMPATHY



HUCKSTER HEAVEN, in Hollywood, set out to fulfill the adman's dream in every particular. It recognized more credit cards than it offered entrées on the menu. Various atmospheres, complete with authentic decor, were offered: Tahitian, Parisian, even Afro-Cuban for the delectation of the Off-Beat Client. In every case, houris glided to and fro in appropriate native costume, bearing viands calculated to quell, at least for the nonce, harsh thoughts of the combative marketplace. Instead, beamish advertisers and their account executive hosts were plied so lavishly that soon the sounds of competitive strife were but a memory; and in the postprandial torpor, dormant dreams of largesse on the Lucullan scale came alive. In these surroundings, droppers of such names as the Four Seasons, George V, and the Stadium Club were notably silent.

Campbell ("Cam") Schofft was ostentatiously honored as one of the Huckster Heaven "ingroup." His business card (die-bumped and gold-dusted, of course) was one of those enshrined, under glass as it were, in the foyer. His advice concerning California land speculation was sought by the maitre d', a worthy who had sold his own posh oasis in Escondido in order to preside at H. H., as the com-

munications fraternity affectionately styled the restaurant. Today, however, Cam was aware of Michel's subtle disapproval as they glided into the Caribbean milieu.

And little wonder: The character awaiting Cam in the booth was definitely not the H. H. type. Far from being cast in the approved lean, sickly, bespectacled mold, Everett O'Toole featured jowls wider than Cam's natural shoulders; and his gut threatened to thrust their tiny table into the houris' concourse. Manhattan innkeepers often confused Everett with Ralph Kramden, a classic comic character of the Sixties still cast occasionally for the *cognoscenti*.

Cam viewed this great flow of flesh with dispassionate eyes. The behemoth spoke:

"Can't resist a fast megabuck, eh, Cam?"

"As you know, hippo, I agreed to meet you here in the naive hope that you had something to contribute to the science of marketing," said Cam.

"Science! Hah!" Everett sucked on his goblet. "I do have something to sell, but it's probably over your head."

"Very possibly. In which event, I'll whirl on to something more productive, and you can pick up your own tab for those half-gallons of equatirial garbage you've been gulping."

Sobered by this threat, Everett looked about with a conspiratorial air and leaned across the table.

"You and that giggle gang you call the Market Research Group have been groping around like so many blind mice. How would you like to know in advance, beyond any cavil, the exact future reaction to any product, new, old or sea-changed—or to any campaign to be inflicted on the peasantry?"

"How would *you* like to be Duke of the Western World, with your castle in Acapulco?"

"That's what keeps alive my faith in you," said Everett. "You *do* understand, a little bit. That's what we call Empathy."

CAM signalled for a Bellafonte Sunrise to fortify himself for the forthcoming adventure in non-Aristotelian ratiocination.

"Empathy is our merchandise," Everett continued, looking around again. "My associates and I have discovered our propensity for experiencing vicariously—with unfortunate intensity—the emotional reactions of others."

"I have encountered many ridiculous routines," Cam advised the Dominican beauty placing new potables before them. "But this wins the Freberg."

"Exhibit A coming up." Everett lapsed into a pose of deep con-

centration, like a two-bit swami. Cam noticed a tiny, rodent-type nose thrusting itself up from Everett's side pocket. "Fear . . . I detect great apprehension—panic—hysteria veging on the loss of reason . . . third booth this side of the runes . . . Valhalla."

Cam rose and went to the Nordic banquet hall. Vikings with groaning platters and great horns of mead almost knocked him down, but he fought his way to the curtained stall described, and eavesdropped.

"He ain't gonna take no for an answer this time, Quiverton," rasped the guttural tones of one occupant. "Gable has to host the new series, with Jean Harlow for the first guest star—or, he gets a new agency."

"Bu-but Fred, they're both dead."

"He ain't gonna stand still for any more alibis. It's up to you—produce, or else! You got a week."

There was a sound of blubbering from within, interspersed with piteous cries like those emitted by a rabbit transfixed by headlights. They sounded to Cam like an account man he knew over at GFR&O; and this in turn meant that the ultimatum was probably proceeding from the fabled throne room of Occidental Tobacco itself, which billed more in one week than some of Cam's clients knew had been

printed. Cam even had a blinding inspiration as to the means by which Occidental's megalomaniac prexy, William McKinley Krog, might be satisfied in this latest necrophiliac whim: Spectaculars built around the classics of the Golden Age of the Silver Screen . . . (By Godfrey! Not a bad series title!) . . . using film clips of deceased movie greats, and emceed by Stanislaus Von Gort, who everybody thought was dead and therefore might as well be.

WITH this melee raging in his skull, Cam dodged back to Everett. He found that worthy sliding liquidly from the booth, his side-pocket familiar now half-emerged and regarding his gross symbiote with more-than-animal concern.

"Quickly" cried Cam to the slave-girl. "Stimulants!"

"We only serve rum drinks in this section," unctuously responded the Nefertiti of the Horse Latitudes; but a blazing glance from Cam sent her scurrying, every cheek a-dance.

"You can see what this takes out of me," said the patient, treating himself with deep draughts of Cam's Sunrise. "I don't know how many more of these I—we-can take."

"Take it easy, boy. I conditionally buy your bit. Save your strength." The small inhabitant

of the side pocket was regarding him with some asperity. "Who's your little chum?"

"I'm hep to your devious mind," giggled Everett. "You charlatan, you've got it figured that he's one of my associates."

"You're stoned," said Cam, leading his obese charge stumbling and falling out of the Caribbean grotto, past the Michael Mouse shrine and the framed Exceptional T & E Vouchers (to which no exception had been taken, thus attesting to the achievement of their authors).

"Get this, you call-boy of the communications complex," shrilled Everett hilariously in the muted beauty of the business-card foyer. "You're right; he is one of our *Gestalt*; but there's a couple more. And Our Gang will cost you, Schofft, cost like crazy . . . But you'll pay, through the nose; because your clients will pay through the nose and ears! He, he, he!" The pained features of the maitre d' reflected exquisite pain as he ushered them into the sunlight.

Cam's car materialized at the curb, and he hustled the sodden Ev into its dark, merciful confines.

"Granted that this entire affair is not some outré hoax . . . a possibility on which I don't entirely close the door . . . your 'merchandise' might better be labelled *Telempathy*," said Cam.

"Button-down lingo," sneered Ev.

"What is that miniature monster in your pocket . . . Marmoset? Mutated rat?"

"Super-mongoose. The result of certain esoteric nuclear experiments off Madagascar."

They hove to at "MAB"—the Merchandising Arts Building, West Coast hub of influence on the docile consumer.

They floated up the exterior tube to the 39th Floor (Socio-Economic) which was actually the hotbed of the political efforts of Cam and his associates. Entry through the wall-port brought them face-to-fang with Father Sowles ("Save Your Souls With Sowles"). The lank, fiery pulpit-pounder had been tabbed as a political natural by certain elders whose money was known as wise; and in consequence, his campaign for the Directorship of North America's Western Zone was being master-minded by Pacific Persuaders, Inc., a pseudopod of the MAB complex.

The crusader struck a Charlton Heston pose and snarled: "In the name of Christendom, what peculiar intruder bring you before me?"

Everett meticulously assayed the gaunt, fanatic figure before him, clad in apostolic robes. "I'll do a lot for a dollar, as the girl said to the soldier, but this is ludicrous. Who needs Telem-

pathy? This cat is so phony, any gossoon can peg him."

Sowles motioned to a monkish aide at a desk, who scribbled furiously in a drab notebook. Cam walked to the aides' side and read: "Gossoons."

"I don't have to look, Cam," said Everett. "I have just issued the death warrant for gossoons, if this vampire ever comes to power, and if he ever finds out what they are."

"Down, boy," said Cam. "Father Sowles, this man and his group appear to possess an instinct or faculty that could make the difference between success and failure. Everett, belay the commentary and look sharp: This is your chance at the large dinero."

"Curt!" Cam called the wall-com. On its screen appeared Curt Andrews, bright young assistant account man, reflexively simulating activity at his desk. "Bring in the Name-O-Scope, please."

CAM turned to explain to the waiting group: "This gadget coming up is another of our recent triumphs in the application of the scientific method to marketing. Just as a computer solves problems in a split second that would take human mathematicians months, the Name-O-Scope arrives at and presents all the bewildering array of possi-

ble cognomens for a given thing in a matter of hours. The proliferating combinations of possible name components are reeled off in a rapid fire for our evaluation."

Curt came in with what appeared to be a portable rear-screen presentation projector, with dials and an extra lead; which lead he attached to the conference table.

"With this device," continued Cam, "Edgar Rice Burroughs would not have to have spent weeks playing with nonsense syllables before styling his hero 'Tarzan'." He guided Ev to a specially constructed chair at the table, rolled up one sleeve, applied the clamp to his bicep. "The machine provided evaluation of alternate names on the basis of blood-pressure fluctuation. Till now, we've had to operate on the basis of a cumulative group reaction, with the obvious disadvantages of all group samples. With Everett & Associates, we may well have a single-unit, perfectly representative sound-ing board."

"Roll 'em, Curt. Ev, if this works, you've made the consultant roster."

"I trust that involves geetus," replied Ev.

Curt dimmed the lights. On the screen, three heraldic cornets sang a fanfare, followed by floating banners:

"POSSIBLE TITLES FOR THE SOWLES MOVEMENT"

This dissolved to an aerial view of the 20th Century war (mostly clips of the Normandy landings). The camera picked out one brave, clean column (new footage) and zoomed in on the device at its fore: A Cross of Lorraine with a Star of David at its center. Superimposed wavy letters faded in:

"THE NEW CHURCH MILITANT"

Curt studied the dial with the aid of a pocketlite, and made a notation. The scene and the martial music faded out, to be replaced by stock footage from medieval epics: Peter the Hermit exhorting knights to smite the Saracen, the clash of Mediterranean men o' war, chivalric pageantry featuring again the cross-and-star:

"CRUSADE FOR OUR TIME"

The eyes of the super-mon-goose gleamed in the shadows as Curt took the reading.

Next came a montage of heroic scenes from two millenia of history: from Agincourt to Iwo, from the villagers marching on Frankenstein's castle to the Four Freedoms conference at sea. One familiar strain underscored all the stirring action; its key words flamed to life:

"SOWLES 'CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS'"

Everett's familiar emitted a shrill squeak. Curt gasped, "Cam! Right off the dial!"

"All right, Curt! Hit the lights . . . We won't bother with the rest."

"What devil's work is this?" demanded the cadaverous Sowles, blinking as the lights went on.

"Father, for the first time in the history of mass opinion manipulation, we are scientifically certain, in advance, of optimum response. Everett and his Telemathetic *Gestalt* have proved to be the equivalent of the world's largest survey sample. In the past, whenever a product was about to be launched on the board waters of the American mercantile ocean, but lacked for a sobriquet, prides of copywriters and other creative people huddled late into the night fashioning Names, from which the entire marketing strategy would flow. Remember the Ocelot, Curt?"

"Lord, will I ever forget it. 18,000 names!"

"On behalf of our airplane account, gentlemen. Of those 18,000 names we dreamed up for the 1981 model, some truly ridiculous labels crept in when fatigue and inbred mental circumlocution weakened our defenses."

"The Dawn Play Air Coupe," recalled Curt, with a shudder. "The Pterrible Pterodactyl . . . The Crimble Inca . . ."

"Spare us, Curt. The point is that as a result of this grisly

experience, we invented the Name-O-Scope. The name 'Ocelot' was ultimately selected, and worked out superbly—through sheer good fortune alone. For your campaign, Father, the Name-O-Scope came up with 3,248 possible slogan-names."

"I saw only three," Sowles said, dourly. His aide scribbled something in the notebook.

"I wouldn't inflict the whole wild roster on you, sir—or even on your adjutant there. But we did expose them to selected samples in thirty major markets; and the cumulative finding put these three in a class by themselves, at the top. Furthermore, these random tests agreed 100% with Everett in the selection of 'SOWLES' CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS' as the ideal motif, out of those pre-eminent three . . . So we are doubly, even triply checked out before take-off; since these findings confirm the humble opinion of our own staff."

The eagle-eyed leader bent his probing gaze on Cam. "So you say, wizard of words. But while you're rejoicing in these strange devices and stranger accomplices, the enemy draws nigh. The primary is but weeks away, and already the invective of the political jackal beats on the ears of the electorate like a stormy sea."

Everett lifted his shaggy head. "You mix a hirsute metaphor, Charlemagne, but my li'l

friends tell me that that's the sort of chatter that the idiot voters will lap up like a friendly Frostee."

"You see, Father—this is the break we needed," pitched Cam. "With this weird talent of Everett *et al*, we can pre-test every element of the great campaign. The pieces of the jigsaw will drop into place overnight, and we can kick off the Big Push next week . . . Like with a monster rally by torchlight and Kleig in Hollywood Bowl . . . Singing our hymn under the stars while millions view . . . How 'bout that, Ev?"

The impresario of the impalpable nodded. "Should be great. Monstrous, in fact."

* * *

IN the day that followed, Cam and all his cohorts in MAB let themselves go in a good old-fashioned creative orgy. With one large difference In the past, copy, layouts, and other campaign ingredients were threshed out in endless conferences, and decisions were made on the basis of an informed group guess. Now, each new idea was exposed at infancy like a Spartan baby to the elemental reaction of Ev & Co., and instantly given the yea or nay.

The rotund oracle was kept under lock and latch in the "Think-Box." This room had

been scientifically designed for sequestering agency people who had to give birth to slogans and such under deadline pressure. The walls were sound-proofed, the couch pulled out into a properly uncomfortable bed, and a refrigerator was stocked with snack makings. It was also served by dumbwaiter. Phones were banished, of course; as was 3-D and all other distraction—even windows. Visual motion was, however, provided by a giant clock. The only concessions to Ev were a special little hutch for the super-mongoose; and a bar, carefully regulated to make certain he never completely blotted out the hypothetical brain-wave "network".

Cam did his best to pump Ev for the identity of his "Associates", but the old sack of iniquity was wise to his game. He'd rear back and squint at Cam like a Lebanese fruit vendor and thoughtfully pick his nose. "Like to know me confederates, is it?" he'd ask. Then, with a great show of candor: "Well, one of them is a sea creature, but I'll say no more than that. I know you'd never be able to live with the thought of being in business with a squid."

Then Ev would laugh wildly. "Ah, wouldn't he like to know!"

"It's only for your own protection," Cam expostulated. "I know there are more people in

this lash-up. We've got to make certain that they're safe from accident—can't have the *Gestalt* disrupted."

"Bosh," was Ev's invariable verdict.

Meanwhile, Cam's little elves paraded through with all the paraphernalia of the Big Push. Livid posters, featuring a Mes-sianic Sowles. Full-page ads, exhorting everyone with an ounce of American decency in his body, to attend the Rally Under The Stars. Subliminal commands were sneaked into the visiphone and 3-D circuits. Couples in Drive-Ins found themselves determined to be among those who stood up to be counted at the Bowl. Christian Soldiers across the continent chartered all manner of craft, from Ocelots to electromag liners, to bear them to the great event. Goodies by the thousand were stamped out to hawk to the faithful: Badges, banners, bumper stickers, wallet cards, purse-sized pix of Sowles, star-and-cross medallions and lapel pins . . . The potential proceeds of the Rally alone began to assume war-chest proportions.

And above all they worked on the Speech. This had to be the greatest sockdolager since Goeb-bels explained Stalingrad. Cam's feverish brain had figured out a host of effects to catalyze the audience reaction. But in the

last analysis, triumph or disaster would hinge on the oral effort of the Grim Reaper, as some of the minions at MAB had come to term Sowles.

So, Huckster Heaven became a memory, like a place in a previous existence. Other clients were neglected; and it was even left to Curt Andrews to follow up Occidental Tobacco.

Books were carted in, thumb-ed through for inspiration, and cast back into the outer corridor in disgust.

"Ev, catch this:

"The flaming light of the Lord shall go forward into the farthest reaches of this planet, to every village and commune where the Anti-Christ has ruled; and indeed it shall go beyond, with mankind's vaulting spirit, to the moon, the planets, and the stars!"

"Not bad," quoth the half-sodden seer, inspecting another treasure from his nasal passages. "My buddies say the marks will go for it like Gang-Busters."

"Kindly refrain from the pseudo-sophisticated jazz," said Cam, in pain. "One of these days your name's going to get written down in that little book. And besides, this is an intrinsically worthwhile movement."

"Kindly refrain yourself from the adman jargon and attempts to snow the troops. This Sowles

is the worst mountebank since Charlie Ponzi, and you know it. You're in this for the fast megabuck same as me, so let's not kid ourselves."

"Euramerica needs just such a unifying figure now," said Cam. "And just such a cause, one that will inspire positive action against the Commie Complex. Otherwise, the U. S. of E. will keep on floundering around in a morass of debate while They single-mindedly weave our doom."

"On a single-minded loom," sang Ev into a snifter. "Who would have thought that my great gift to the world would be put to such a perverse use right off the bat?"

"Speaking of bat, let's get back on the ball." And the hands of the clock rolled round and round . . .

* * *

TWO days before the Rally, an exhausted Cam tottered to the visiphone down the hall, and dialled Sowles' Temple.

The monkish aide answered. "Sowles' Christian Soldiers; Brother Kane here."

"What became of Abel?" asked Cam before his cortex could intervene. The aide's eyes glowed with a promise of vengeance, as he put Cam through to Sowles.

"How do the preparations

progress?" asked the ex-cleric.

"Well, sir. Which is why I called. The first draft of the Speech is ready."

"I'll be there within the hour," said Sowles, and the screen blanked.

When Sowles arrived at MAB, an Execusec conducted him to the door of the "Think-Box." He stared disapprovingly after her. "When the Soldiers hold sway, modesty will be rigidly enforced."

Cam dictated a memo to his pocket recorder forbidding MAB girls to observe the current abbreviated fashions.

"Well, well; Friar Tuck," burbled Ev from his customary prone position on the couch. "Have a toddy, and get that tired, cold blood circulating."

"Revolting," said Sowles.

"Politics make strange bed-fellows, eh, Sowles? Like you 'n' me! And let's not forget the Little Brown Jug! Ho, ho, ho!"

Sowles turned to (or rather, on) Cam. "The Speech?"

"Right. The Speech. Right here, sir." Cam tendered the manuscript.

The Grimmost of Reapers found the most uncomfortable chair in the room, sat, and began reading. The first page was peeled off and dropped to the floor; the second; the third; and finally, the entire effort was strewn beside Sowles, who rose

in what he undoubtedly considered righteous wrath.

"You've missed the whole *Message!*" he hissed.

"Sir?"

"All this Pollyanna frou-frou is all right as frosting—but you've left out the *cake!*"

Cam was momentarily spooked—and not "on account of the account," either. Sowles looked fully capable of loosing a full-fledged Inquisition, complete with rack and thumbscrew, at Cam's well-barbered head.

Sowles continued to fulminate. "You haven't got one word in there about our *enemies!*"

"But Father, I refer several times to the Slave World and its evil rulers . . ."

"Not just *Them!* What about the traitors in our midst—the sinister cabal of pinko liberals and moderate conservatives that have undermined our defenses . . ."

"I thought the Smirch Society had staked out that claim," said Cam.

"Bah! The Smirchers are too mealy-mouthed for the needs of the hour. I think *they're* a little soft on Communism. And what about the race mongrelizers?" spluttered Sowles. "Trying to subvert America with an Afro-Asian Trojan Horse!"

"I suppose you can trace your ancestry all the way back to Caligula," muttered Everett.

"That's right, you human sewer! If I hadn't been assured you might be of use to the Cause—" He left the sentence unfinished.

"I get the picture, Father." Cam ushered Sowles to the door. "We'll get the new draft out right away."

"And don't forget the economic heretics," Sowles shouted as the door closed on him. "The fiends that concocted the income tax, and Social Security, and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, and . . ."

"Wow," breathed Cam, when the torrent was finally cut off.

"How do you like Galahad now?" asked Ev from the bar.

"Build me one too," answered Cam.

* * *

Nevertheless, the revision had to be done, and done it was.

"That'll have 'em seein' Red, all right," pronounced Everett.

"It's got everything in it except a declaration of war on Switzerland," said Cam ruefully.

"Quiet—or he'll hear about that, and want it too," said Ev.

THE Day of the Rally dawned bright and smoggy, but the weather boys promised a clear, cool evening. Naturally, the major 3-D nets were all set to 'cast the "birth in the Bowl" of a potentially historic campaign. Satellites would bounce the sig-

nal over oceans and continents, throughout Euramerica, as well carrying the presentation as to allies and unaligned nations from Tokyo to Karachi. The crusading aspect of Sowles' candidacy had been tom-tommed so well that pundits were already predicting that Sowles might easily go on to the Governorship of North America two years hence—if, indeed, his Soldiers did not sweep to control of the U. S. of E. Parliament then. That, of course, would install the Grim Reaper in the Presidential Palace . . . Cam shuddered and thrust the thought from his mind. But wild dreams aside, there was no doubt that two hemispheres' attention was riveted on the big-time debut of the West Coast's Angel of Vengeance.

En route to the Bowl, the "Soldier" theme was already manifest. Every few feet, a "Brother-Private" in a new, usually ill-fitting uniform was directing traffic or hawking MAB-confected wares. "Father-General" Sowles appeared to have lifted more than one leaf from the Salvation Army's book.

Cam himself had been verbally commissioned Brother Lieutenant-Colonel when the revised oration had been submitted to Sowles. The Reaper ate it up this trip. "You'd have thought it came down from Sinai on tab-

lets," said Ev after Sowles left to begin practicing the Speech.

"He'll make it sound that way," Cam had remarked. "Above all, Our Leader is a great orator."

"Translation: bloody demagogue," Ev had replied.

Now their chauffeured air-suspension limo was tooling them up through the thickening crowds to the hill-cradled amphitheater.

Curt had come along to help. "What's going to happen to the overflow?" he asked anxiously, peering at the turgid sea of faces outside.

"Special buses will take them to closed circuit 3-D houses," said Cam.

"Fantastic," said Ev.

Inside, there were just about the same number of last-minute panics and snafus as at most 3-D spectacles. Power for the innumerable huge coaxial snakes was several times inadequate, which problem no one, of course, had foreseen. But eventually all the crises had had their moment and were coped with—and suddenly it was almost air time.

Cam, Curt, and Ev repaired to the control booth and found an area where they wouldn't be under the technicians' feet. (Cam had decreed a triple platoon system on this one: a fresh director and crew were alternated in every fifteen minutes.) Ev pro-

duced a flask, which Cam and Curt declined; but the super-mongoose took a few greedy licks at the cap.

"A lush *Gestalt* yet," muttered Curt.

"Don't insult the folks that put you in silk, sonny," advised Ev.

"Tell me about the others now," said Cam. "Everything's out of our hands anyhow."

EV breathed deeply. "Okay, I'll tell you a wee bit. One of us is a Pathan valet in Bombay—which would cut up the Reaper worse than the fictitious *entente* with the squid. And the Pathan must have a few drops of Irish blood and, ergo, second sight—he contributes enormously to the acuity of our insight into potential human reaction."

"Mmmm. And?"

"My small friend here, the super-mongoose, is the amplifier. Some goofy new gland, I suppose—or as you guessed, a mutational development. In that tiny *corpus*, however it came about, is an organ that enables us to communicate on an elemental level among ourselves without regard to mileage; and to probe psyches anywhere in the world—as many as we want. Actually, we have to keep his output at a fraction of capacity, or else get swamped in a tidal wave of emotion."

"That accounts for three. But

you indicated there were four," said Cam.

"No, I never! But you're right. There is a fourth. Twelve years old; IQ about 180. Never even leaves his room. But his mind—and his psi faculties—have seven-league boots. He runs our team."

"Where does he live?"

"High on a windy hill. He, he, he!" Ev hit the flask as a trout the fly, and an engineer glared. The gradually rising stage lights signalled the Zero Second in a symphony of changing color.

First, the cross-and-star symbol grew from a tiny point on the stage until it became a living pillar of luminosity that seemed to dwarf the night.

Then came the distant music of fife and drum, augmented by cornet: "Yankee Doodle;" and in the traditional Revolutionary regalia, the musical minute-men led a parade down the aisles of the Chorla Guard. They segued to "Onward Christian Soldiers" as they marched past the mesmerized audience, up to and onto the stage; and topped off the medley with "The Battle Hymn of The Republic." It was only great.

"The folks are already on the ropes," said Ev.

"Where does he live?" asked Cam.

A Brother-Major came forward and led the Choral Guard

and audience in a responsive psalm that emphasized the smiting of enemies. With the "Amen", the cameras panned with the audience's eyes up to the pregnant night sky. You could hear an option drop.

Then the Guard did some fancy quick-step singing on stage: "God Bless America"; "Over there"; and "The Soldiers Are Coming", to the tune of "The Campbells Are Coming", complete with bagpipe brigade.

Next, a rather hard-featured Sister Captain told how the growing army of the Lord needed support. The Offertory was handled by Brother N. C. O.'s while super-imposed 3-D slides told the brethren at home exactly how to get their bux to Sowles. Meanwhile a battery of organs swept through the "*Marseillaise*", "Land Of Hope And Glory", and other U. S. of E. songs. Finally, a Guard contralto came forward and got the whole crowd on its feet to join her in singing "The Star Spangled Banner."

"They're limp as old wet-wash," said Ev.

NOW the Bowl went dark except for the pale light of the moon and stars. Minutes passed. Eventually, a spotlight picked out Sowles standing alone, quietly, meditatively, at Stage Right. He looked as though wondering

if it was all right to come out. The audience went wild. Cam reflected that it probably would have, even without the clauques he had planted. As it was, had the Bowl had a roof, it would have been blasted off.

"We're picking up reactions like mad," said Ev.

"The U. S. of E. audience alone will hit at least 200 million," said Cam.

"All thinking—I should say feeling—like one great docile beast."

"Where does he live?" Cam asked again.

"Tibet," blurted Ev unthinkingly; then he turned and glared at Cam as he might at a tarantula in his daiquiri.

But Sowles had begun to speak. A huge rear-projection screen behind him visualized each thought uttered. He started with the theme of the West: how logical that a great new crusade should be born here where men of the cloth had first blazed Western civilization's trails; Berkeley was quoted about the Westward Star of Empire; this was the shore sought by the most valiant of the westering tide of pioneers; etc., etc. Meanwhile the 3-D living mural milked Western scenery to a fare-thee-well. Gaunt fishermen stared out over Puget Sound, and Big Sur underlined the concept of rugged strength. Mount

McKinley and Mazatlan passed in review.

Then Sowles got down to business. This vital young giant—the West—was not going to let the effete pestholes of the East (by this he meant all the way East, including Stockholm, Athens, and Kashmir) forfeit the Caucasian heritage with their decadent goings-on. The Commie Complex was not going to be handed the rest of the planet on a silver platter because of Euramerican “marshmallow moral fiber.”

He proceeded to the list of Hates: Welfare Statism: tyranny by tax (“Remember the Boston Tea Party!”); loose divorce laws; fraternal lodges; “promiscuous enfranchisement”; water fluoridation; and so on. These were but a few of the cancers, he screamed, that must be ruthlessly excised from the body politic so that a lean, clean Euramerica might face the Arch-Enemy on reasonably even terms.

“They’re frothing at the mouth,” said Ev.

Now Sowles really tore the rag off the bush. He described the Godless Atheists that held half the world in thrall. He rehearsed again the butchery of the kulaks and the kangaroo courts of Cuba. He showed the Mongol tanks rumbling into Budapest and the pinched-face terror of the East German refugees; the

“human sea” charges in Korea and the flight of the Dalai Lama.

Suddenly Cam was struck by a wild surmise.

“Number Four—he’s the Panchen Lama, isn’t he?” Cam knew that the current Red puppet high priest was about twelve.

“You win the cigar,” said Ev.

Cam made up his mind quickly. “Ev, listen to me and do exactly as I say. This is crucial.”

“What?”

“Turn up the gain on the mon-goose.”

“What for? It’s all I can stand right now!”

“Never mind. Turn it up.”

“You’re the account exec.”

NOW Sowles began telling in hushed whispers how it would be under the Reds. The huge mural became a panorama of rapine. Commie soldiers sacked Euramerican cities and hamlets. Girls were dragged off for the pleasure of drunken battalions. Barbarian guffaws rang out as homes and stores were pillaged and put to the torch.

“Ourch!” gritted Ev. “All this hate . . .”

“Have another snort and turn up the gain.”

The crowd began to low like a cow in labor. Sowles swung into the climax: A series of questions shouted to the audience . . .

“Would you work night and day to crush this menace to your

homes, your family, your country, your *God*?"

"YES!" The hills rang with the full-throated bellow.

"Would you fight, and if need be, die, to save our civilization and slay the Commie monsters in their lairs?"

"YES!"

Cam thought he could even hear answering shouts from outside the Bowl. "Turn up the gain again."

"Will you place in the hands of your servants, the Christian Soldiers, all powers necessary to crush the barbarian tide?" This last was fairly screamed. Sowles was draped across the podium, arms outstretched to the audience.

"YES! YES! YES!" thundered the reverberating response.

Fife, drum, and cornet struck up "Onward" very softly.

"Will you follow me to the ends of the earth—to the very gates of Red Hell itself—destroying every obstacle in our path—until the Anti-Christ has been annihilated root and branch, and we have come into our Kingdom? Will you follow ME??!"

Pandemonium. The crowd surged into the aisles, falling in with the Choral Guard, singing, shouting, weeping.

"He hit high C," said Ev.

"Full gain," said Cam.

Ev gulped more skull-buster and stroked the "amplifier" in the region of the pancreas.

Sowles' arms were uplifted, and one of Cam's clever little effects haloed his flying locks.

"KILL THE REDS!" he shrilled.

"Kill . . . REDS . . . KILL . . . REDS . . ." chanted the crowd, in time to the drum.

The bright feral light of the super-mongoose's eyes seemed to lance at Sowles, like an infra-red flash. Then there was a puff where the would-be messiah had stood—a crackle, and a smell of scorched air; but no more Sowles.

"He's gone!" said Curt.

"You're damn right, and thank God for it," said Cam, ministering to Ev who had slumped unconscious from his chair.

* * *

THE mob broke up uncertainly, with the disappearance of the focus for its concerted blood-lust. The police asked many questions but none of the right ones. Finally, Cam, Ev, and Curt escaped to the waiting limo and started the long slow crawl downhill.

"Now—give," said Ev.

"Feedback. That's why I had you unleash Mighty Mouse. All that hate in hundreds of millions of people *had* to boomerang back

through your *Gestalt* in some psi-fashion . . . although I did not anticipate the pyrotechnics—or should I say pyrokinetics?”

“But what for, Cam?” asked Curt. “I’ve never seen such an effective job of mass influence.”

“He could have been elected President tomorrow,” said Ev.

“That’s just it—we did too good a job. And I think that’s the way your Tibetan quarter-back wanted it.” Cam tilted Ev’s flask. “Sowles was a cinch to go all the way, which would have meant all-out war. Maybe your junior Fu Manchu figured he could pick up the pieces afterwards.”

“How could he know you’d have a character like Sowles all set to go?” Ev said. “Oh, I get it—precognition. It’s fortunate that his crystal ball didn’t read

as far as the outcome tonight.”

“In any case, we’d better get your Pathan over here, and start rebuilding your *Gestalt*,” said Cam. “You won’t hear from the Panchen—he’s undoubtedly constructing a new, all-Red unit right now. After this bit, psi faculties, including telepathy, have to be considered another weapons family in the Cold War . . . a new set of pieces of the big chessboard. So you’re going to have to find a substitute for the Himalayan Quiz Kid, and git crackin’.”

“I’ll consider your application,” said Ev, giving his flask the *coup de grace*; and the lights of L.A. rushed up around them like a huge breaker—gaudy, garish, and beautifully comprehensible.

THE END



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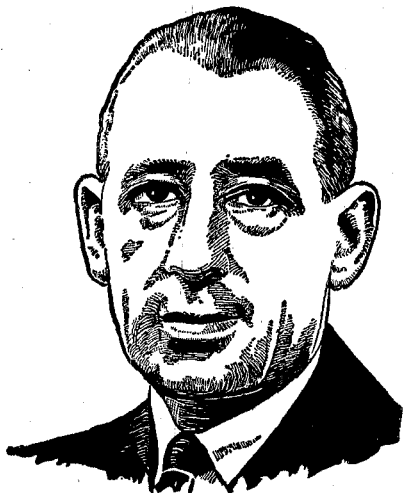
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ERIC FRANK RUSSELL:

Death of a Doubter

By SAM MOSKOWITZ



THERE are some tales so good one hates to see them die. Among them is the fiction that Eric Frank Russell's submission of the novel *Sinister Barrier* to John W. Campbell inspired the publication of the magazine, UNKNOWN. It is easy to find circumstantial evidence to "support" the story. Just before UNKNOWN's first issue on Feb. 10, 1939 featuring *Sinister Barrier*, posters reproducing its cover were carried on the sides of magazine delivery trucks, *Sinister Barrier* was also promoted in advance by its publishers as "The greatest imaginative novel in two decades!"

"Swift death awaits the first cow that leads a revolt against milking," were the opening lines

of *Sinister Barrier*. Utilizing a quote from Charles Fort, "I think we are property," Russell built his plot on the "realization" by humans that the planet Earth is "owned" by alien globes of light called Vitons, who "breed" us like cattle and influence our history for their own ill-defined purposes.

The début of the magazine and the publication of the novel seemed too happy a wedding to be fortuitous. Nevertheless it was. The novel had been submitted to Campbell in 1938 for ASTOUNDING SCIENCE-FICTION. It was shifted to UNKNOWN when the plans for that magazine jelled.

In retrospect, the major impact of the novel depended almost entirely on its daring con-

cept. It had drawbacks: unnecessary action was utilized to extend the length of the story; the reader frequently found himself losing track of the identity of the characters; the logic became gossamer thin at points. The novel's seeming great strength—apparent originality of theme—was dismissed when Thos. S. Gardner, Ph.D., writing in the March 5, 1939, issue of FANTASY NEWS, pointed out: "The same plot was developed with an unusual twist that Russell's *Sinister Barrier* does not contain in a short story by Edmond Hamilton in WEIRD TALES. The story was *The Earth Owners* and was published in the August issue in 1931. Even the same quotation from one of Fort's books is used in both stories. In order to appreciate *Sinister Barrier* one should also read Hamilton's story and notice the difference in the endings."

Hamilton's plot had one group of radiant globes (similar to the Vitons) as protectors of the Earth against raiding black clouds who fed on humans. The implication was that Earth was being shielded from harm until man achieved a state of development where he could fend for himself. Russell disclaimed any prior knowledge of Hamilton's effort, attributing the plot similarity to unrelated reading of Charles Fort. Both were members of the Fortean Society. It is

the oft-repeated case of the first man to use the idea not always being the one to popularize it. As far as the science-fiction world is concerned, Russell and the "I think we are property" theme are synonymous. There is no question that the widespread use of Fortean material in science fiction stems from the publication of *Sinister Barrier*.

ERIC FRANK RUSSELL, boasting Irish blood in his veins, was born in Sandhurst, Surrey, England, Jan. 6, 1905. His father was an instructor at the Military College in Sandhurst. The family moved frequently, and part of his childhood was spent in Egypt, where he was close enough to the natives to learn Arabic (which he gradually forgot, except for profanity). Russell's education was a good one, obtained at schools for sons of British officers in both England and Egypt. The courses read impressively, including chemistry, physics, building and steel construction, quantity surveying, mechanical draughtsmanship, metallurgy, and crystallography. Neither moving from place to place nor intensive study seemed to stunt his growth. Russell grew to be six feet two, 180 pounds, with great hands and a cocksure smile. While in the process of finding himself he worked as a soldier,

telephone operator, quantity surveyor and government draughtsman. He met and married a nurse. They have a daughter named Erica, because she was born on Eric's birthday, Jan 6, 1934.

Interest in science fiction was a life-long process of development for Russell, beginning with fairy tales, mythology and English legends and continuing through the discovery of the science fiction magazines. When he became a technical representative and trouble shooter for an engineering firm in Liverpool, Russell set into motion the series of circumstances that would bring him in contact with the inner-circle group of the science fiction movement. Two men had been primarily responsible for the formation of the British Interplanetary Society in October, 1933: P. E. Cleator, the acting president; and Leslie J. Johnson, a youthful Liverpool scientificist. A news story about the meeting caught Russell's attention. Russell was already contributing articles to trade magazines and house organs, and had done a series of articles on "Interplanetary Communications" (based on the writings of the Russian Tsiolkovski) for a private periodical. Impressed by Russell's skill, Johnson urged him to try science fiction, suggesting a plot for a story to be

called *Eternal Re-diffusion*. Russell completed it and sent it to F. Orlin Tremaine, editor of *ASTOUNDING STORIES*. When it was rejected as being too difficult for the reader to grasp, Russell started to tear it up. Johnson, horrified, claimed the story and retained it as a souvenir. It has never been published.

A SECOND attempt, *The Saga of Pelican West*, a novelet done by Russell on his own, appeared in the Feb., 1937 issue of *ASTOUNDING STORIES*. The influence of the late Stanley G. Weinbaum permeated the story; most obviously in the person of Alfred, a talking "Callistrian domestic ulahuala, or reticulated python." During a period when science fiction could best be described as "dull," the story was refreshing. The only adverse comments from readers referred to the weakness of some of the science. To these Russell replied in the June, 1937 *SCIENTI-FICTION*, the British Fantasy Review, that he noted plausibility higher than pure scientific accuracy. Russell immediately followed with *The Great Radio Peril*, a short story published in the April, 1937 *ASTOUNDING STORIES*, actually a social satire aimed at the mushrooming radio networks. The first issue of the British *Tales of Wonder* on June 29, 1937 found a Russell story, *The*

Prr-r-eet, on the contents page. The story evoked a feeling of empathy for the "humanity" of a martian creature, despite its bizarre form. Before it leaves Earth, it gives man a device for simultaneously blending color and sound into a new type of music. This idea was supplied by Arthur C. Clarke, who had met Russell at a London meeting of the Science Fiction Association. Clarke got 10% of the price of the story—something under three dollars. This was the first money Clarke ever earned as a science fiction professional.

A sequel to *The Saga of Pelican West* was logically undertaken, submitted under the title of *They Who Sweep*. The story was rewritten three times and finally literally consigned to the flames with an incredulous Leslie Johnson castigating Russell as a "madman" when he found out. A 20,000-word effort, *Trumpeter, Sound the Recall!*, "a story of future warfare in which 100 million men get killed because one man throws away a banana skin," suffered a like fate. *Sub-microwave Hypnosis*, "showing how thought control is put on a business basis," was discarded two thirds of the way through when someone beat Russell into print with the plot. *The Atom-packer*, a tale in which the menace from outer space is treated in a light fashion, couldn't seem

to find a home in any of the magazines.

ALL this represented a substantial amount of time and effort that could have been spent by Russell with his family or in just plain pleasurable reading. Writing began to look much less attractive to him. Nevertheless, he persisted. A brief poetic story titled *Mana* appeared in the December, 1937 *ASTOUNDING STORIES*. It told of the last man on Earth, who steps up intelligences in ants to the point where they are on the road to civilization with little wheelbarrows, bows-and-arrows, and fire.

So far Russell showed much greater promise stylistically than in creativity. Most of the stories he had sold were derivative in plot or method from other authors; or were collaborations, where the idea was supplied to him and he "put the flesh on the skeleton." This weakness may have stemmed from Russell's philosophical outlook. In a letter published in the July, 1937 issue of *NOVAE TERRAE*, a British science fiction fan magazine, he called himself "another young rationalist of 32 years of age." "Rationalism" is an outlook that recognizes only what is demonstrable to the human intellect. Its adherents believe reason is the best means of attaining ultimate knowledge. It rejects the emo-

tions and the imagination as a means of intellectual advancement. It does not, automatically, deny the existence of God or the immortality of the soul, since St. Thomas Aquinas is considered one of the great rationalists. But it is a philosophy of skepticism, which urges its adherents to doubt everything. The weakness of the Rationalist viewpoint is that it promulgates no ideas of its own; it waits to be shown. Stubbornly waiting to be shown, Russell had a hard time dreaming up new plot ideas.

Paradoxically, the two greatest influences on his thinking were men noted for their attempts to shatter complacency and to broaden the scope of men's thinking. The first was Olaf Stapledon, who, in his book *Last and First Men* (1930) supplied many of the basic concepts which form the foundation of the latter-day school of science fiction writers. Stapledon, then a Professor of Philosophy at Liverpool University, sent a letter of inquiry to the British Interplanetary Society in the summer of 1936 (he eventually joined). Russell saw the letter and visited him. He introduced Stapledon to the science fiction magazines.

The second and more obvious influence was a strange little Bronx, N.Y., man named Charles Foy Fort, who spent a lifetime

accumulating 40,000 clippings on seemingly inexplicable events: poltergeists; red rain; rains of frogs, fish, stones; strange lights in the sky; disappearances; levitation and related bizarre and unusual phenomenon. He was not satisfied only with documenting such notices; he also offered his own interpretations, displaying so vast an imaginative resource as to become a bottomless reservoir of science fiction plots. Many of his clippings and observations were presented in four books, the first of which, *The Book of the Damned*, was published in 1919. The most famed of the quartet was *Lo!*, issued in 1931 and reprinted in full in *ASTOUNDING STORIES*, April to Nov., 1934, inclusive. Together with his other two volumes, *New Lands* (1923) and *Wild Talents* (1932), these were collected by Henry Holt and issued in 1941 as *The Books of Charles Fort*. This volume became the bible of The Fortean Society.

RUSSELL had read *Lo!* in *ASTOUNDING STORIES*, but it had made no impression at the time. However, when he stumbled across a British edition of *Lo!* in a secondhand book shop he went quickly mad. His life-long ambition became the resolve to complete the set. He contacted American antiquarian dealers and secured all but *New Lands*. For

Wild Talents he paid \$27, an amount which represented two weeks pay for the average Britisher in the 1930's (and in terms of today's purchasing power amounted to spending \$270 for a book!). From *Lo!* he secured the plot nucleus of *Sinister Barrier*, and from Olaf Stapledon's *Last and First Men* he acknowledged acquisition of the theme of symbiotic relationship—two intelligent life forms interdependent as the humans and Vitons were on earth.

The \$600 he received for *Sinister Barrier* helped make it possible for him to visit America with his wife in May, 1939. He mortgaged his vacations for the next two years with his employers in order to make an extended stay of six weeks. In America he met Edmond Hamilton. The two had in common, in addition to an interest in science fiction writing, membership in The Fortean Society. Hamilton gave him his own copy of *New Lands* (enabling Russell to complete his Fort collection,) as well as a letter from and a photo of Charles Fort. This remained the high spot of the American visit in Russell's memory.

Whether wartime responsibilities now limited his time (he took radio courses at Northern Polytechnic, London, and the Marconi College, Chelmsford) is not known, but 1940 saw the ap-

pearance of only two pieces: *Spontaneous Frognation* (UNKNOWN, July, 1940) and *I, Spy* in the Autumn, 1940 TALES OF WONDER, a superbly handled novella of a Martian capable of simulating any living form—plant, animal or human being, who is loose on Earth. One of Russell's friends in England was Maurice G. Hugi, a writer who had sold a few stories to TALES OF WONDER. One of his stories just couldn't make the grade. He showed it to Russell, who liked the plot and offered to rework it. The actual writing is said to have taken place during a bombing raid on Liverpool, with Russell on the floor beneath the bed or the table (versions differ) pounding away on a typewriter. What emerged was *The Mechanical Mice*, published under Maurice G. Hugi's name in the Jan., 1949 ASTOUNDING SCIENCE-FICTION. The story involves a man who extracts from the future the idea of a machine, which when built, mothers tiny mechanical "mice" which steal materials necessary to reproduce its host. The story is considered a minor masterpiece of science fiction and quite probably the inspiration of Lewis Padgett's *Twonkey*.

THE birth of the most famous character created by Russell came about, he recalls, "when I was seeking a plot and realized I

had never attempted a robot yarn." The result was *Jay Score*, outwardly giving the appearance of a giant human, who appropriately debuted in a story titled *Jay Score* (ASTOUNDING SCIENCE-FICTION, May, 1941). The space ship crew in the story, including a group of many-tentacled Martian chess masters, provided a cast of characters as engaging as anything seen since the entourage of the once-famed Doc Savage stories. The heroic efforts of *Jay Score*, together with the special talents of the Martians, save the space ship from a fiery death in the bosom of the sun in a rather routine introductory adventure. The cast of *Jay Score* returned in a sequel, *Mechanistria* (ASTOUNDING SCIENCE-FICTION, Jan., 1942), to engage in an exciting adventure on a planet dominated by a civilization of diverse machinery ruled by a computing unit. But the most influential of the *Jay Score* stories was *Symbiotica* (ASTOUNDING SCIENCE-FICTION, Oct., 1943). Stapledon's concept of interdependent life forms was utilized to show a world where humanoids lived in symbiosis with trees and indirectly with other life forms on their planet. It appears to have been the springboard of most of the important stories involving symbiosis as a plot basis in science fiction.

Until now, almost all of

Russell's plots had been carried along on a stream of physical action. In the short novel *Metamorphosite*, which appeared in the Dec., 1946 ASTOUNDING, he cerebrally constructed an absorbing situation in which a Galactic empire seeks to annex a world of apparent humanoids only to learn, in a superlative revelation ingeniously impacted by indirection, that evolution has made this impossible. Russell's stock rose in the literary marketplace. But his most spectacular success in the Forties proved to be the novel *Dreadful Sanctuary* (ASTOUNDING, June-Aug., 1948) built around the activities of The Normans, a secret society whose members represented themselves as the only completely sane members on earth (all other races are the lunatics dumped here by other worlds). When they are deposed it paves the way for the first landing on the moon. Well written and fast-paced, *Dreadful Sanctuary* betokened the fact that Russell had written himself back into the front rank of science fiction writers.

STORIES from his typewriter now began to increase in frequency, and they were modern in style, facile in plotting, with emphasis on clever endings. A typical example was *U Turn* under the pen name of Duncan H. Munro in the April, 1950 ASTOUNDING

SCIENCE-FICTION, where those who apply for euthanasia on a "perfect" but dull earth wind up as guinea pigs for matter transmitters, with survivors deposited on Callisto. *Dear Devil*, cover story for the May, 1950 issue of OTHER WORLDS SCIENCE STORIES, precipitated a flood of enthusiasm with readers nominating it for the unofficial distinction of best novelet of the year. "Dear Devil" is a Martian poet and artist who elects to stay behind when an exploring party finds Earth a war-blasted, nearly lifeless world. Ghastly blue in color, with gigantic tentacles instead of hands, he overcomes the repugnance of a group of deserted Earth children (who call him "Devil") with an exercise of kindness, and guides them paternally so they grow to build a new civilization. Told compassionately, the story is one of the most effective calls for racial tolerance ever to appear in or out of science fiction.

Even more effective in its way was *The Witness*, in the September, 1951 OTHER WORLDS SCIENCE STORIES. An intelligent reptilian creature, which has come from outer space and crashed on a farm, is put on trial as a menace to the human race. The same keynote of tolerance pervades *Fast Falls the Eventide* (ASTOUNDING SCIENCE-FICTION, May, 1952). In the distant future Earth has be-

come a training school from which humans are sent by quota to live among diverse races of the galaxy, teaching by their very presence universal brotherhood, regardless of form. It has been suggested that this story, like *Dear Devil* and *The Witness*, are not actually parables of racial tolerance at all, but merely an expression of Russell's encompassing love of most birds, animals and even insects. Russell has admitted to "friends" in his garden and to prolonged "discussions" with them. He has also let slip that he is frequently an object of suspicion at zoos. In the future of *Fast Falls the Eventide*, even the insects have advanced in intelligence and listen intently if not comprehendingly to human talk directed at them. We read:

"The children of this world were bugs.

And birds

And bipeds

Moth, Magpies and man, all were related."

When Russell writes: "Thus it was in no way odd that Melisande should talk to a small beetle," he is writing of himself.

THE concept that other forms of life are not inferior merely because they are different remains constant throughout Russell's writing. It is the central theme of the early story *The Prr-*

r-eet, it appears in *Mana*, again in *The Eighth Wonder*. It even extends to a robot, such as Jay Score, and most certainly to his unusual Martian shipmates. It is the none-too-subtle message conveyed by the discovery of the telepathic power of camels in *Homo Saps* and is distinctly present in *The Hobbyist*. Little else can be read into the poignant *Postscript* (SCIENCE-FICTION PLUS, Oct., 1953) where an old man finds he must adjust to the realization that a creature from a distant star system with whom he has corresponded all his life and whose letters display an outlook of femininity, is actually a fungoid growth.

Russell's total output across the years has not been great, despite the fact that his most cherished ambition is to become a professional writer. Yet he won a Hugo for the best short science fiction story of 1955, presented at the 13th World Science Fiction Convention, Sept. 3, 1955, for *Allamagoosa* (ASTOUNDING SCIENCE-FICTION, May, 1955). And despite the limitations and diffuse spread of his output, Russell's influence has been substantial. For good or bad, the astonishing bulk of science fiction plastered around Fortean phenomena and verging logically off into strange talents, stems from him. In fact, Russell virtually

parodies the genre in his novel *The Star Watchers* (STARTLING STORIES, Nov., 1951) which includes 12 major mutations each enjoying a variation in special powers. Additionally, he acted as a bridge to carry many of the ideas of Olaf Stapledon into the science fiction magazines.

Most significant of all is the final impression the works give of the man. The display of outward toughness of manner, speech and philosophy is a façade. A man who feels not only a reverence for but a communion with life, who transmits those feelings and with them his protests against prejudice in terms of poetry and parable—such a man is *not* a rationalist. (*Or is he the only real rationalist?*—Ed.)

The point is underscored in *I am Nothing*, where the dictator who has started a war for conquest and power reads the childish scrawl of an orphaned "enemy" girl: "*I am nothing and nobody. My house went bang. My cat was stuck to a wall. I wanted to pull it off. They wouldn't let me. They threw it away.*" The dictator loses his appetite to continue the war and negotiates a peace. This is not an appeal from the intellect to the intellect. This is an appeal from the emotions to the emotions.

**Read this story. Then
we dare you to watch television.
we just dare you!**

through channels

By ARTHUR PORGES

IT was the seventh game of the most exciting World Series in the history of baseball. The score was tied at one run each; it was the last half of the ninth, two outs, the bases loaded, the count three and two on the best Yankee hitter in fifty years.

On almost two hundred million TV sets the contest reached its climax in three dimensional color while the country's business remained in a state of suspended animation. Two hundred million faces red with emotion; two hundred million throats hoarse from shouting.

The pitcher made his wind-up, glanced at first, and threw...

* * *

At the same time, on a different channel, a famous audience participation program was in progress. A fat woman with needle-pointed plugs in her ears was trying to explode six red balloons before her opponent could

eat three yards of taffy rope. A prize worth \$10,000 would go to the winner. Fifty million people watched the contest, competing by proxy, and lusting for the prize.

There was one balloon left; eight inches of sticky candy...

* * *

Simultaneously, the latest idol of the teen-agers was starring on Channel 17. He had a smooth, fleshy face, large, dark eyes like blobs of unstrained honey. His voice, to a trained musician, was a painful bleat something like the honking of a goose. But it had a direct line to three hundred million young gonads...

* * *

On still another channel, a fundamentalist preacher from Arkansas was speaking. There was foam on his lips; he shouted, wept, roared, and snarled. He seemed almost wholly illiterate, but with a terrible passion be-

hind his words. It was mostly of sin, damnation, and hellfire that he spoke. Unless a man believed every word of the Holy Bible, literally, he was doomed to hell. That meant most of the world was beyond hope. In this day of shameless sinning, forgetful of Jehovah, whoring after strange new Gods, ridden with atheistic Communism, what a pitiful few might be saved. But listen to me, Brother . . .

IN a secret headquarters, other minds were busy. Never before, in the history of the world, had lines of communication offered such an opportunity. Right now, on just four channels, access to more than four hundred million men and women was available. The silent, invisible electro-magnetic waves passed unimpeded into nearly every home in the world. They emerged from TV sets as visible light, entered millions of eager eyes, struck sparks on as many retinas, and stirred new electric currents in the related brains. How easy to impose one more frequency on the universal carrier wave . . .

* * *

The pitcher threw; two hundred million watchers leaned forward, potato chips halfway to their mouths—and froze. For them, that climactic moment would never be lost. It was print-

ed in their brains forever. No matter where they ended up—hospital, asylum, back bedroom with peeling walls—always the same vision before them of the lean pitcher flinging the critical ball in this, the high spot of the most exciting World Series in baseball history. The weeping of their wives, the voices of their children, these would never break through to that inner world of ball approaching home plate . . .

* * *

At the same time, the people watching the audience participation program were also given their moment to hold forever. The last balloon still evaded the fat woman with the needles protruding from her ears. Her competitor still gulped, green-faced, at the last length of taffy cord. It was touch-and-go; life at its peak. Who would win . . . ? No matter that the screen was dark; the day long gone. In their minds' eyes, that last plunge for the goal would never fade . . .

* * *

And the preacher's words also were insects in the amber of millions of brains. His audience sat quietly, cheeks flushed, hearts pounding, in a state of near-sexual excitement, listening to the prophet. They would never hear anything else. Not the alarm calling them to their jobs; not the sizzling of the bacon; not the warm whispers of their women.

The teen-agers were the worst cheated; they might have grown away from the singer in time, but there was no time once the secret headquarters struck. In their ears were the words: "You hurt me, Baby; I'm hurtin' so. Don't hurt me, Baby; I lu-u-u-ve you so-o." The sleek, fleshy face, the dark-honey eyes, the nasal

bleat—these were their future.

And in the secret headquarters, glances of congratulation were exchanged; hands firmly wrung.

Then a clear, melodious voice cut through the murmur: "We'll fix another batch of them when the football season starts."

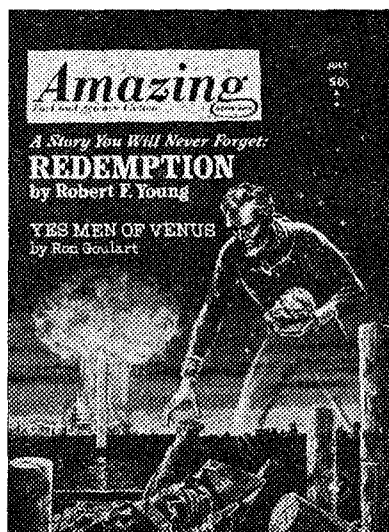
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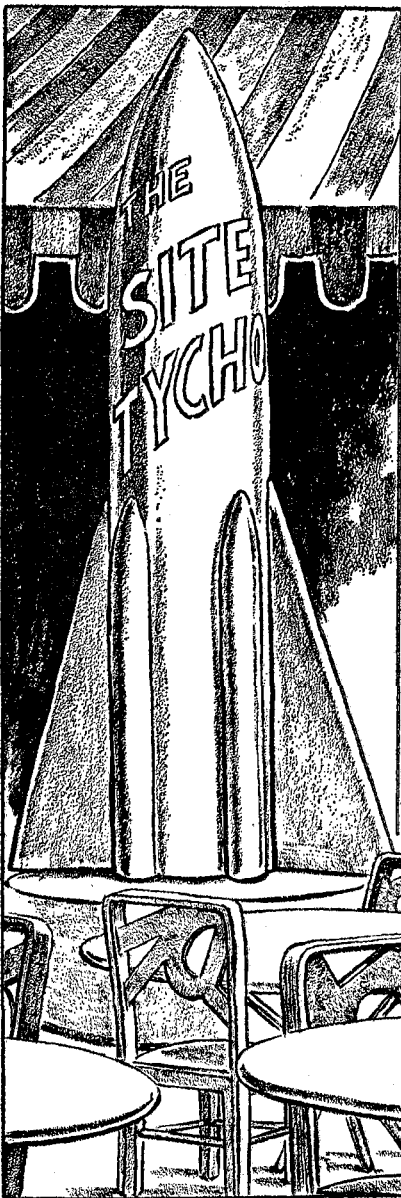
COMING NEXT MONTH

We do not often go out on a limb and predict that a specific story will become a landmark of sf. But the July **AMAZING** has, we believe, such a story in **Robert F. Young's Redemption**. It is a many-layered tale, twisting back and forth across space and time, with a strange ghost of a hero, a saint-sinner of a heroine, and a theme larger than life or death. Do not miss it!

The July **AMAZING** has other not-to-be-missed items. For instance, the concluding instalment of **Jack Sharkey's** novel, *The Programmed People*. And a hilarious satire of guess-who by **Ron Goulart**, titled, for your amazed amusement, *Yes Men of Venus*.

Plus other stories, features and our regular departments. The July issue of **AMAZING** goes on sale at newsstands on July 11.





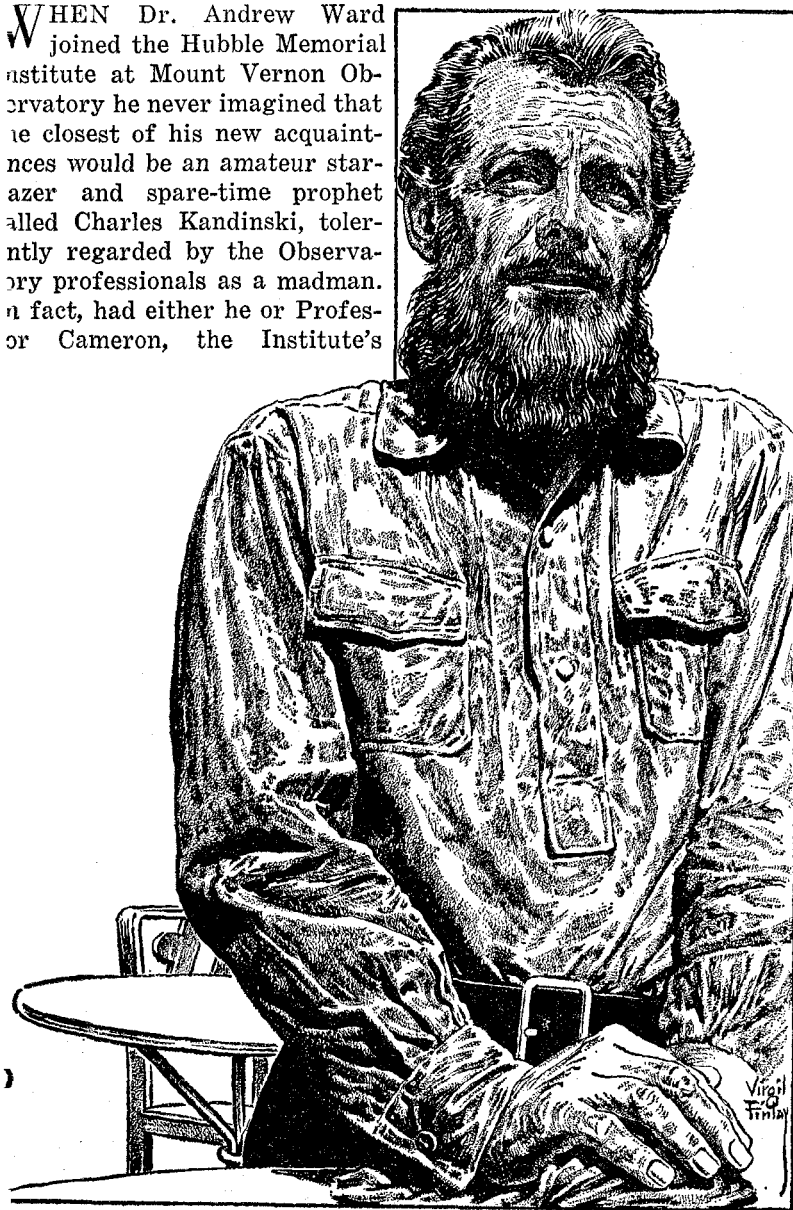
In the famed short story, The Lady or the Tiger? the reader had to decide for himself whether the hero opened the door leading to the beautiful maiden or the killer beast. In this keenly penetrating story of man's humanity to man, you are given, in effect, the same problems: Did Andrew Ward see the flying saucer, or did he see a man who needed to have his vision corroborated?

THE ENCOUNTER

By J. G. BALLARD

Illustrated by FINLAY

WHEN Dr. Andrew Ward joined the Hubble Memorial Institute at Mount Vernon Observatory he never imagined that the closest of his new acquaintances would be an amateur stargazer and spare-time prophet called Charles Kandinski, tolerantly regarded by the Observatory professionals as a madman. In fact, had either he or Professor Cameron, the Institute's



Deputy Director, known just how far he was to be prepared to carry this friendship before his two-year tour at the Institute was over, Ward would certainly have left Mount Vernon the day he arrived and would never have become involved in the bizarre and curiously ironic tragedy which was to leave an ineradicable stigma upon his career.

* * *

Professor Cameron first introduced him to Kandinski. About a week after Ward came to the Hubble he and Cameron were lunching together in the Institute cafeteria.

"We'll go down to Vernon Gardens for coffee," Cameron said when they finished dessert. "I want to get a shampoo for Edna's roses and then we'll sit in the sun for an hour and watch the girls go by." They strolled out through the terrace tables towards the parking lot. A mile away, beyond the conifers thinning out on the slopes above them, the three great Vernon domes gleamed like white marble against the sky. "Incidentally, you can meet the opposition."

"Is there another observatory at Vernon?" Ward asked as they set off along the drive in Cameron's Buick. "What is it—an Air Force weather station?"

"Have you ever heard of Charles Kandinski?" Cameron said. "He wrote a book called

'The Landings from Outer Space.' It was published about three years ago."

Ward shook his head doubtfully. Then slowed down past the check-point at the gates and Cameron waved to the guard. "Is that the man who claims to have seen extra-terrestrial beings? Martians or—"

"Venusians. That's Kandinski. Not only seen them," Professor Cameron added. "He's talked to them. Charles works at a cafe in Vernon Gardens. We know him fairly well."

"He runs the other observatory?"

"Well, an old 4-inch MacDonald Refractor mounted in a bucket of cement. You probably wouldn't think much of it, but I wish we could see with our two-fifty just a tenth of what he sees."

Ward nodded vaguely. The two observatories at which he had worked previously, Cape Town and the Milan Astrographic, had both attracted any number of cranks and charlatans eager to reveal their own final truths about the cosmos, and the prospect of meeting Kandinski interested him only slightly. "What is he?" he asked. "A practical joker, or just a lunatic?"

PROFESSOR Cameron propped his glasses on to his forehead and negotiated a tight hairpin. "Neither," he said.

Ward smiled at Cameron, idly studying his plump cherubic face with its puckish mouth and keen eyes. He knew that Cameron enjoyed a modest reputation as a wit. "Has he ever claimed in front of you that he's seen a . . . Venusian?"

"Often," Professor Cameron said. "Charles lectures two or three times a week about the landings to the women's societies around here, and put himself completely at our disposal. I'm afraid we had to tell him he was a little too advanced for us. But wait until you meet him."

Ward shrugged and looked out at the long curving peach terraces lying below them, gold and heavy in the August heat. They dropped a thousand feet and the road widened and joined the highway which ran from Vernon Gardens across the desert to Santa Vera and the coast.

Vernon Gardens was the nearest town to the Observatory and most of it had been built within the last few years, evidently with an eye on the tourist trade. They passed a string of blue and pink-washed houses, a school constructed of glass bricks and an abstract Baptist chapel. Along the main thoroughfare the shops and stores were painted in bright jazzy colors, the vivid awnings and neon signs like street scenery in an experimental musical.

Professor Cameron turned off

into a wide tree-lined square and parked by a cluster of fountains in the center. He and Ward walked toward the cafes—Al's Fresco Diner, Ylla's, the Dome—which stretched down to the sidewalk. Around the square were a dozen gift-shops filled with cheap souvenirs: silver-plate telescopes and models of the great Vernon dome masquerading as ink-stands and cigar-boxes, plus a juvenile omnium gatherum of miniature planetaria, space helmets and plastic 3-D star atlases.

The cafe to which they went was decorated in the same futuristic motifs. The chairs and tables were painted a drab aluminium grey, their limbs and panels cut in random geometric shapes. A silver rocket ship, ten feet long, its paint peeling off in rusty strips, reared up from a pedestal among the tables. Across it was painted the cafe's name.

"The Site Tycho."

A large mobile had been planted in the ground by the side-walk and dangled down over them, its vanes and struts flashing in the sun. Gingerly Professor Cameron pushed it away. "I'll swear that damn thing is growing," he confided to Ward. "I must tell Charles to prune it." He lowered himself into a chair by one of the open-air tables, put on a fresh pair of sunglasses and focussed

them at the long brown legs of a girl sauntering past.

LEFT alone for the moment, Ward looked around him and picked at a cellophane transfer of a ringed planet glued to the table-top. The Site Tycho was also used as a small science fiction exchange library. A couple of metal bookstands stood outside the cafe door, where a soberly dressed middle-aged man, obviously hiding behind his up-turned collar, worked his way quickly through the rows of paperbacks. At another table a young man with an intent serious face was reading a magazine. His high cerebrotonic forehead was marked across the temple by a ridge of pink tissue, which Ward wryly decided was a lobotomy scar.

"Perhaps we ought to show our landing permits," he said to Cameron when after three or four minutes no one had appeared to serve them. "Or at least get our pH's checked."

Professor Cameron grinned. "Don't worry, no customs, no surgery." He took his eyes off the side-walk for a moment. "This looks like him now."

A tall, bearded man in a short-sleeved tartan shirt and pale green slacks came out of the cafe towards them with two cups of coffee on a tray.

"Hello, Charles," Cameron

greeted him. "There you are. We were beginning to think we'd lost ourselves in a time-trap."

The tall man grunted something and put the cups down. Ward guessed that he was about 55 years old. He was well over six feet tall, with a massive sunburnt head and lean but powerfully muscled arms.

"Andrew, this is Charles Kandinski." Cameron introduced the two men. "Andrew's come to work for me, Charles. He photographed all those Cepheids for the Milan Conference last year."

Kandinski nodded. His eyes examined Ward critically but showed no signs of interest.

"I've been telling him all about you, Charles," Cameron went on, "and how we all follow your work. No further news yet, I trust?"

Kandinski's lips parted in a slight smile. He listened politely to Cameron's banter and looked out over the square, his great seamed head raised to the sky.

"Andrew's read your book, Charles," Cameron was saying. "Very interested. He'd like to see the originals of those photographs. Wouldn't you, Andrew?"

"Yes, I certainly would," Ward said.

KANDINSKI gazed down at him again. His expression was not so much penetrating as detached and impersonal, as if he

were assessing Ward with an utter lack of bias, so complete, in fact, that it left room for even the smallest illusion. Previously Ward had only seen this expression in the eyes of the very old. "Good," Kandinski said. "At present they are in a safe deposit box at my bank, but if you are serious I will get them out."

Just then two young women wearing wide-brimmed Rapallo hats made their way through the tables. They sat down and smiled at Kandinski. He nodded to Ward and Cameron and went over to the young women, who began to chatter to him animatedly.

"Well, he seems popular with them," Ward commented. "He's certainly not what I anticipated. I hope I didn't offend him over the plates. He was taking you seriously."

"He's a little sensitive about them," Cameron explained. "The famous dustbin-lid flying saucers. You mustn't think I bait him, though. To tell the truth I hold Charles in great respect. When all's said and done, we're in the same racket."

"Are we?" Ward said doubtfully. "I haven't read his book. Does he say in so many words that he saw and spoke to a visitor from Venus?"

"Precisely. Don't you believe him?"

Ward laughed and looked

through the coins in his pocket, leaving one on the table. "I have not tried to yet. You say the whole thing isn't a hoax?"

"Of course not."

"How do you explain it then? Compensation-fantasy or—"

Professor Cameron smiled. "Wait until you know Charles a little better."

"I already know the man's messianic," Ward said dryly. "Let me guess the rest. He lives on yoghurt, weaves his own clothes, and stands on his head all night, reciting the Bhagavadgita backwards."

"He doesn't," Cameron said, still smiling at Ward. "He happens to be a big man who suffers from barber's rash. I thought he'd have you puzzled."

WARD pulled the transfer off the table. Some science fantast had skillfully pencilled an imaginary topography on the planet's surface. There were canals, craters and lake systems named Verne, Wells and Bradbury. "Where did he see this Venusian?" Ward asked, trying to keep the curiosity out of his voice.

"About twenty miles from here, out in the desert off the Santa Vera highway. He was picnicking with some friends, went off for a stroll in the sandhills and ran straight into the space-ship. His friends swear he

was perfectly normal both immediately before and after the landing, and all of them saw the inscribed metallic tablet which the Venusian pilot left behind. Some sort of ultimatum, if I remember, warning mankind to abandon all its space programs. Apparently someone up there does not like us."

"Has he still got the tablet?" Ward asked.

"No. Unluckily it combusted spontaneously in the heat. But Charles managed to take a photograph of it."

Ward laughed. "I bet he did. It sounds like a beautifully organized hoax. I supposed he made a fortune out of his book?"

"About 150 dollars. He had to pay for the printing himself. Why do you think he works here? The reviews were too unfavorable. People who read science fiction apparently dislike flying saucers, and everyone else dismissed him as a lunatic." He stood up. "We might as well get back."

As they left the cafe Cameron waved to Kandinski, who was still talking to the young women. They were leaning forward and listening with rapt attention to whatever he was saying.

"What do the people in Vernon Gardens think of him?" Ward asked as they moved away under the trees.

"Well, it's a curious thing, al-

most without exception those who actually know Kandinski are convinced he's sincere and that he saw an alien space craft, while at the same time realizing the absolute impossibility of the whole story."

"I know God exists, but I cannot believe in him?"

"Exactly. Naturally, most people in Vernon think he's crazy. About three months after he met the Venusian, Charles saw another UFO chasing its tail over the town. He got the Fire Police out, alerted the Radar Command chain and even had the National Guard driving around town ringing a bell. Sure enough, there were two white blobs diving about in the clouds. Unfortunately for Charles, they were caused by the headlights of one of the asparagus farmers in the valley doing some night spraying. Charles was the first to admit it, but at 3 o'clock in the morning no one was very pleased."

"Who is Kandinski, anyway?" Ward asked. "Where does he come from?"

"He doesn't make a profession of seeing Venusians, if that's what you mean. He was born in Alaska, for some years taught psychology at Mexico City University. He's been just about everywhere, had a thousand different jobs. A veteran of the private evacuations. Get his book."

WARD murmured non-committally. They entered a small arcade and stood for a moment by the first shop, an aquarium called 'The Nouvelle Vague', watching the Angel fish and Royal Brahmins swim dreamily up and down their tanks.

"It's worth reading," Professor Cameron went on. "Without exaggerating, it's really one of the most interesting documents I've ever come across."

"I'm afraid I have a closed mind when it comes to interplanetary bogey-men," Ward said.

"A pity, Cameron rejoined. "I find them fascinating. Straight out of the unconscious. The fish too," he added, pointing at the tanks. He grinned whimsically at Ward and ducked away into a horticulture store halfway down the arcade.

While Professor Cameron was looking through the sprays on the hormone counter, Ward went over to a newsstand and glanced at the magazines. The proximity of the observatory had prompted a large selection of popular astronomical guides and digests, most of them with illustrations of the Mount Vernon domes on their wrappers. Among them Ward noticed a dusty dog-eared paperback, 'The Landings from Outer Space,' by Charles Kandinski. On the front cover a gigantic space vehicle, at least the size of New York, tens of thou-

sands of portholes ablaze with light, was soaring majestically across a brilliant backdrop of stars and spiral nebulae.

Ward picked up the book and turned to the end cover. Here there was a photograph of Kandinski, dressed in a dark lounge suit several sizes too small, peering stiffly into the eye-piece of his MacDonald.

Ward hesitated before finally taking out his wallet. He bought the book and slipped it into his pocket as Professor Cameron emerged from the horticulture store.

"Get your shampoo?" Ward asked.

Cameron brandished a brass insecticide gun, then slung it, buccaneer-like, under his belt. "My disintegrator," he said, patting the butt of the gun. "There's a positive plague of white ants in the garden, like something out of a science fiction nightmare. I've tried to convince Edna that their real source is psychological. Remember the story 'Leiningen vs the Ants'? A classic example of the forces of the Id rebelling against the Super-Ego." He watched a girl in a black bikini and lemon-colored sunglasses move gracefully through the arcade and added meditatively: "You know, Andrew, like everyone else my real vocation is to be a psychiatrist. I spend so long analyzing my

motives I've no time left to act."

"Kandinski's Super-Ego must be in difficulties," Ward remarked. "You haven't told me your explanation yet."

"What explanation?"

"Well, what's really at the bottom of this Venusian he claims to have seen?"

"Nothing is at the bottom of it. Why?"

Ward smiled helplessly. "You will tell me next that you really believe him."

Professor Cameron chuckled. They reached his car and climbed in. "Of course I do," he said.

WHEN, three days later, Ward borrowed Professor Cameron's car and drove down to the rail depot in Vernon Gardens to collect a case of slides which had followed him across the Atlantic, he had no intention of seeing Charles Kandinski again. He had read one or two chapters of Kandinski's book before going to sleep the previous night and dropped it in boredom. Kandinski's description of his encounter with the Venusian was not only puerile and crudely written but, most disappointing of all, completely devoid of imagination. Ward's work at the Institute was now taking up most of his time. The Annual Congress of the International Geophysical Association was being held at Mount Vernon in little

under a month, and most of the burden of organizing the three-week program of lectures, seminars and dinners had fallen on Professor Cameron and himself.

But as he drove away from the depot past the cafes in the square he caught sight of Kandinski on the terrace of the Site Tycho. It was 3 o'clock, a time when most people in Vernon Gardens were lying asleep indoors, and Kandinski seemed to be the only person out in the sun. He was scrubbing away energetically at the abstract tables with his long hairy arms, head down so that his beard was almost touching the metal tops, like an aboriginal half-man prowling in dim bewilderment over the ruins of a futuristic city lost in an inversion of time.

On an impulse, Ward parked the car in the square and walked across to the Site Tycho, but as soon as Kandinski came over to his table he wished he had gone to another of the cafes. Kandinski had been reticent enough the previous day, but now that Cameron was absent he might well turn out to be a garrulous bore.

After serving him Kandinski sat down on a bench by the bookshelves and stared moodily at his feet. Ward watched him quietly for five minutes, as the mobiles revolved delicately in the warm air, deciding whether to approach Kandinski. Then he stood

up and went over to the rows of magazines. He picked in a desultory way through half a dozen and turned to Kandinski. "Can you recommend any of these?"

Kandinski looked up. "Do you read science fiction?" he asked matter-of-factly.

"Not as a rule," Ward admitted. When Kandinski said nothing he went on: "Perhaps I'm too skeptical, but I can't take it seriously."

Kandinski pulled at a blister on his palm. "No one suggests you should. What you mean is that you take it too seriously."

Accepting the rebuke with a smile at himself, Ward pulled out one of the magazines and sat down at a table next to Kandinski. On the cover was a placid suburban setting of snugly eaved houses, yew trees and children's bicycles. Spreading slowly across the roof-tops was an enormous pulpy nightmare, blocking out the sun behind it and throwing a weird phosphorescent glow over the roofs and lawns. "You're probably right," Ward said, showing the cover to Kandinski. "I'd hate to want to take that seriously."

KANDINSKI waved it aside. "I have seen 11th century illuminations of the pentateuch more sensational than any of these covers." He pointed to the cinema theatre on the far side of

the square, where the four-hour Biblical epic 'Cain and Abel' was showing. Above the trees an elaborate technicolored hoarding showed Cain, wearing what appeared to be a suit of Roman armor, wrestling with an immense hydraheaded boa constrictor.

Kandinski shrugged tolerantly. "If Michelangelo were working for MGM today would he produce anything better?"

Ward laughed. "You may well be right. Perhaps the House of the Medicis should be re-christened '16th Century-Fox.'"

Kandinski stood up and straightened the shelves. "I saw you here with Godfrey Cameron," he said over his shoulder. "You're working at the Observatory?"

"At the Hubble."

Kandinski came and sat down beside Ward. "Cameron is a good man. A very pleasant fellow."

"He thinks a great deal of you," Ward volunteered, realizing that Kandinski was probably short of friends.

"You mustn't believe everything that Cameron says about me," Kandinski said suddenly. He hesitated, apparently uncertain whether to confide further in Ward, and then took the magazine from him. "There are better ones here. You have to exercise some discrimination."

"It's not so much the sensa-

tionalism that puts me off," Ward explained, "as the psychological implications. Most of the themes in these stories come straight out of the more unpleasant reaches of the unconscious."

Kandinski glanced sharply at Ward, a trace of amusement in his eyes. "That sounds rather dubious and, if I may say so, second-hand. Take the best of these stories for what they are: imaginative exercises on the theme of tomorrow."

"You read a good deal of science fiction?" Ward asked.

Kandinski shook his head. "Never. Not since I was a child."

"I'm surprised," Ward said. "Professor Cameron told me you had written a science fiction novel."

"Not a novel," Kandinski corrected.

"I'd like to read it," Ward went on. "From what Cameron said it sounded fascinating, almost Swiftian in concept. This space-craft which arrives from Venus and the strange conversations the pilot holds with a philosopher he meets. A modern morality. Is that the subject?"

Kandinski watched Ward thoughtfully before replying. "Loosely, yes. But, as I said, the book is not a novel. It is a factual and literal report of a Venus landing which actually took place, a diary of the most significant encounter in history since

Paul saw his vision of Christ on the road to Damascus." He lifted his huge bearded head and gazed at Ward without embarrassment. "As a matter of interest, as Professor Cameron probably explained to you, I was the man who witnessed the landing."

Still maintaining his pose, Ward frowned intently. "Well, in fact Cameron did say something of the sort, but I . . ."

"But you found it difficult to believe?" Kandinski suggested ironically.

"Just a little, Ward admitted. "Are you seriously claiming that you did see a Venusian space-craft?"

Kandinski nodded. "Exactly." Then, as if aware that their conversation had reached a familiar turning, he suddenly seemed to lose interest in Ward. "Excuse me." He nodded politely to Ward, picked up a length of hose-pipe connected to a faucet and began to spray one of the big mobiles.

PUZZLED but still skeptical, Ward sat back and watched him critically, then fished in his pockets for some change. "I must say I admire you for taking it all so calmly," he told Kandinski as he paid him.

"What makes you think I do?"

"Well, if I'd seen, let alone spoken to a visitor from Venus I think I'd be running around in a flat spin, notifying every gov-

ernment and observatory in the world."

"I did," Kandinski said. "As far as I could. No one was very interested."

Ward shook his head and laughed. "It is incredible, to put it mildly."

"I agree with you."

"What I mean," Ward said, "is that it's straight out of one of these science fiction stories of your's."

Kandinski rubbed his lips with a scarred knuckle, obviously searching for some means of ending the conversation. "The resemblance is misleading. They are not my stories," he added parenthetically. "This cafe is the only one which would give me work, for a perhaps obvious reason. As for the incredibility, let me say that I was and still am completely amazed. You may think I take it all calmly, but ever since the landing I have lived in a state of acute anxiety and foreboding. But short of committing some spectacular crime to draw attention to myself I don't see now how I can convince anyone."

Ward gestured with his glasses. "Perhaps. But I'm surprised you don't realize the very simple reasons why people refuse to take you seriously. For example, why should you be the only person to witness an event of such staggering implications? Why

have *you* alone seen a Venusian?"

"A sheer accident."

"But why should a space craft from Venus land here?"

"What better place than near Mount Vernon Observatory?"

"I can think of any number. The UN Assembly, for one."

Kandinski smiled lightly. "Columbus didn't make his first contacts with the North-American Indians at the Iroquois-Sioux Tribal Conference."

"That may be," Ward admitted, beginning to feel impatient. "What did this Venusian look like?"

Kandinski smiled wearily at the empty tables and picked up his hose again. "I don't know whether you've read my book," he said, "but if you haven't you'll find it all there."

"Professor Cameron mentioned that you took some photographs of the Venusian space-craft. Could I examine them?"

"Certainly," Kandinski replied promptly. "I'll bring them here tomorrow. You're welcome to test them in any way you wish."

THAT evening Ward had dinner with the Camerons. Professor Renthall, Director of the Hubble, and his wife completed the party. The table-talk consisted almost entirely of good-humored gossip about their col-

leagues retailed by Cameron and Renthall, and Ward was able to mention his conversation with Kandinski.

"At first I thought he was mad, but now I'm not so certain. There's something rather too subtle about him. The way he creates an impression of absolute integrity, but at the same time never gives you a chance to tackle him directly on any point of detail. And when you do manage to ask him outright about this Venusian his answers are far too pat. I'm convinced the whole thing is an elaborate hoax."

Professor Renthall shook his head. "No, it's no hoax. Don't you agree, Godfrey?"

Cameron nodded. "Not in Andrew's sense, anyway."

"But what other explanation is there?" Ward asked. "We know he hasn't seen a Venusian, so he must be a fraud. Unless you think he's a lunatic. And he certainly doesn't behave like one."

"What is a lunatic?" Professor Renthall asked rhetorically, peering into the faceted stem of his raised hock glass. "Merely a man with more understanding than he can contain. I think Charles belongs in that category."

"The definition doesn't explain him, sir," Ward insisted. "He's going to lend me his photographs and when I prove those are fakes

I think I'll be able to get under his guard."

"Poor Charles," Edna Cameron said. "Why shouldn't he have seen a space ship? I think I see them every day."

"That's just what I feel, dear"

Cameron said, patting his wife's matronly brocaded shoulder. "Let Charles have his Venusian if he wants to. Damn it, all it's trying to do is ban Project Apollo. An excellent idea, I have always maintained, only the professional astronomer has any business in space. After the Rainbow tests there isn't an astronomer anywhere in the world who wouldn't follow Charles Kandinski to the stake." He turned to Renthall. "By the way, I wonder what Charles is planning for the Congress? A Neptunian? Or perhaps a whole delegation from Proxima Centauri. We ought to fit him out with a space suit and a pavilion—'Charles Kandinski—New Worlds for Old'."

"Santa Claus in a space-suit," Professor Renthall mused. "That's a new one. Send him a ticket."

THE next weekend Ward returned the twelve plates to the Site Tycho.

"Well?" Kandinski asked.

"It's difficult to say," Ward answered. "They're all too heavily absorbed. They could be clever

er montages of light brackets and turbine blades. One of them looks like a close-up of a clutch plate. There's a significant lack of any really corroborative details, which you'd expect somewhere in so wide a selection." He paused. "On the other hand, they could be genuine."

Kandinski said nothing, took the paper package and went off into the cafe.

The interior of the Site Tycho had been designed to represent the control room of a space-ship on the surface of the Moon. Hidden fluorescent lighting glimmered through plastic wall fascia and filled the room with an eerie blue glow. Behind the bar a large mural threw the curving outline of the Moon on to an illuminated star-scape. The doors leading to the rest-rooms were circular and bulged outwards like air-locks, distinguished from each other by the symbols ♂ and ♀. The total effect was ingenious but somehow reminiscent to Ward of a 25th century cave.

He sat down at the bar and waited while Kandinski packed the plates away carefully in an old leather briefcase.

"I've read your book," Ward said. "I had looked at it the last time I saw you, but I read it again thoroughly." He waited for some comment upon this admission, but Kandinski went over to an old portable typewriter

standing at the far end of the bar and began to type laboriously with one finger. "Have you seen any more Venusians since the book was published?" Ward asked.

"None," Kandinski said.

"Do you think you will?"

"Perhaps." Kandinski shrugged and went on with his typing.

"What are you working on now?" Ward asked.

"A lecture I am giving on Friday evening," Kandinski said. Two keys locked together and he flicked them back. "Would you care to come? Eight-thirty, at the high school near the Baptist chapel."

"If I can," Ward said. He saw that Kandinski wanted to get rid of him. "Thanks for letting me see the plates." He made his way out into the sun. People were walking about through the fresh morning air, and he caught the clean scent of peach blossom carried down the slopes into the town.

Suddenly Ward felt how enclosed and insane it had been inside the Tycho, and how apposite had been his description of it as a cave, with its residential magician incanting over his photographs like a down-at-heel Merlin manipulating his set of runes. He felt annoyed with himself for becoming involved with Kandinski and allowing the po-

tent charisma of his personality to confuse him. Obviously Kandinski played upon the instinctive sympathy for the outcast, his whole pose of integrity and conviction a device for drawing the gullible towards him.

Letting the light spray from the fountains fall across his face, Ward crossed the square towards his car.

Away in the distance 2,000 feet above, rising beyond a screen of fir trees, the three Mount Vernon domes shone together in the sun like a futuristic Taj Mahal.

FIFTEEN miles from Vernon Gardens the Santa Vera highway circled down from the foot of Mount Vernon into the first low scrub-covered hills which marked the southern edge of the desert. Ward looked out at the long banks of coarse sand stretching away through the haze, their outlines blurring in the afternoon heat. He glanced at the book lying on the seat beside him, open at the map printed between its end covers, and carefully checked his position, involuntarily slowing the speed of the Chevrolet as he moved nearer to the site of the Venus landings.

In the fortnight since he had returned the photographs to the Site Tycho, he had seen Kandinski only once, at the lecture de-

livered the previous night. Ward had deliberately stayed away from the Site Tycho, but he had seen a poster advertising the lecture and driven down to the school despite himself.

The lecture was delivered in the gymnasium before an audience of forty or fifty people, most of them women, who formed one of the innumerable local astronomical societies. Listening to the talk around him, Ward gathered that their activities principally consisted of trying to identify more than half a dozen of the constellations. Kandinski had lectured to them on several occasions and the subject of this latest instalment was his researches into the significance of the Venusian tablet he had been analyzing for the last three years.

When Kandinski stepped on to the dais there was a brief round of applause. He was wearing a lounge suit of curiously archaic cut and had washed his beard, which bushed out above his string tie so that he resembled a Mormon patriarch or the home-spun saint of some fervent evangelical community.

For the benefit of any new members he prefaced his lecture with a brief account of his meeting with the Venusian, and then turned to his analysis of the tablet. This was the familiar ultimatum warning mankind to

abandon its preparations for the exploration of space, for the ostensible reason that, just as the sea was a universal image of the unconscious, so space was nothing less than an image of psychosis and death, and that if he tried to penetrate the interplanetary voids man would only plunge to earth like a demented Icarus, unable to comprehend the vastness of the cosmic zero. Kandinski's real motives for introducing this were all too apparent—the expected success of Project Apollo and subsequent landings on Mars and Venus would, if nothing else, conclusively expose his fantasies.

However, by the end of the lecture Ward found that his opinion of Kandinski had experienced a complete about face.

As a lecturer Kandinski was poor, losing words, speaking in a slow ponderous style and trapping himself in long subordinate clauses, but his quiet, matter-of-fact tone and absolute conviction in the importance of what he was saying, coupled with the nature of his material, held the talk together. His analysis of the Venusian cryptograms, a succession of intricate philosophical theorems, was well above the heads of his audience, but what began to impress Ward, as much as the painstaking preparation which must have preceded the lecture, was Kandinski's acute

nervousness in delivering it. Ward noticed that he suffered from an irritating speech impediment that made it difficult for him to pronounce 'Venusian', and he saw that Kandinski, far from basking in the limelight, was delivering the lecture only out of a deep sense of obligation to his audience and was greatly relieved when the ordeal was over.

At the end Kandinski had invited questions. These, with the exception of the chairman's, all concerned the landing of the alien space vehicle and ignored the real subject of the lecture. Kandinski answered them all carefully, taking in good part the inevitable facetious questions. Ward noted with interest the audience's curious ambivalence, simultaneously fascinated by and resentful of Kandinski's exposure of their own private fantasies, an expression of the same ambivalence which had propelled so many of the mana-personalities of history towards their inevitable Calvaries and apotheoses.

Just as the chairman was about to close the meeting, Ward stood up.

"Mr. Kandinski. You say that this Venusian indicated that there was also life on one of the moons of Uranus. Can you tell us how he did this, if there was no



verbal communication between you?"

Kandinski showed no surprise at seeing Ward. "Certainly; as I told you, he drew eight concentric circles in the sand, one for each of the planets. Around Uranus he drew five lesser orbits and marked one of these. Then he pointed to himself and to me and to a patch of lichen. From this I deduced, reasonably I maintain, that—"

"Excuse me, Mr. Kandinski," Ward interrupted. "You say he drew five orbits around Uranus? One for each of the moons?"

Kandinski nodded. "Yes. Five."

"That was in 1960," Ward went on. "Three weeks ago Professor Pineau at Brussels discovered a sixth moon of Uranus."

The audience looked around at Ward and began to murmur.

"Why should this Venusian have omitted one of the moons?" Ward asked, his voice ringing across the gymnasium.

Kandinski frowned and peered at Ward suspiciously. "I didn't know there was a sixth moon . . ." he began.

"Exactly!" someone called out. The audience began to titter.

"I can understand the Venusian not wishing to introduce any difficulties," Ward said, "but this seems a curious way of doing it."

Kandinski appeared at a loss. Then he introduced Ward to the audience. "Dr. Ward is a professional while I am only an amateur," he admitted. "I am afraid I cannot explain the anomaly. Perhaps my memory is at fault. But I am sure the Venusian drew only five orbits." He stepped down from the dais and strode out hurriedly, scowling into his beard, pursued by a few derisory hoots from the audience.

It took Ward fifteen minutes to free himself from the knot of admiring white-gloved spinsters who cornered him between two vaulting horses. When he broke away he ran out to his car and drove into Vernon Gardens, hoping to see Kandinski and apologize to him.

FIVE miles into the desert Ward approached a nexus of rock-cuttings and causeways which were part of an abandoned irrigation scheme. The colors of the hills were more vivid now, bright siliconic reds and yellows, crossed with sharp stabs of light from the exposed quartz veins. Following the map on the seat, he turned off the highway on to a rough track which ran along the bank of a dried-up canal. He passed a few rusting sections of picket fencing, a derelict grader half-submerged under the sand,

and a collection of dilapidated metal shacks. The car bumped over the potholes at little more than ten miles an hour, throwing up clouds of hot ashy dust that swirled high into the air behind him.

Two miles along the canal the track came to an end. Ward stopped the car and waited for the dust to subside. Carrying Kandinski's book in front of him like a divining instrument, he set off on foot across the remaining three hundred yards. The contours around him were marked on the map, but the hills had shifted several hundred yards westwards since the book's publication and he found himself wandering about from one crest to another, peering into shallow depressions only as old as the last sand-storm. The entire landscape seemed haunted by strange currents and moods; the sand-swirls surging down the aisles of dunes and the proximity of the horizon enclosed the whole place of stones with invisible walls, and it was like the center of a vast centripetal system that might at any moment implode into a maelstrom of colliding debris.

Finally he found the ring of hills indicated and climbed a narrow saddle leading to its center. When he scaled the thirty-foot slope he stopped abruptly.

Down on his knees in the mid-

dle of the basin with his back to Ward, the studs of his boots flashing in the sunlight, was Kandinski. There was a clutter of tiny objects on the sand around him, and at first Ward thought he was at prayer, making his oblations to the tutelary deities of Venus. Then he saw that Kandinski was slowly scraping the surface of the ground with a small trowel. A circle about 20 yards in diameter had been marked off with pegs and string into a series of wedge-shaped allotments. Every few seconds Kandinski carefully decanted a small heap of grit into one of the test-tubes mounted in a wooden rack in front of him.

WARD put away the book and walked down the slope. Kandinski looked around and then climbed to his feet. The coating of red ash on his beard gave him a fiery prophetic look. He recognized Ward and raised the trowel in greeting.

Ward stopped at the edge of the string perimeter. "What on earth are you doing?"

"I am collecting soil specimens." Kandinski bent down and corked one of the tubes. He looked tired but worked away steadily.

Ward watched him finish a row. "It's going to take you a long time to cover the whole area. I thought there weren't any

gaps left in the Periodic Table."

"The space-craft rotated at speed before it rose into the air. This surface is abrasive enough to have scratched off a few minute filings. With luck I may find one of them." Kandinski smiled thinly. "262. Venusium, I hope."

Ward started to say: "But the transuranic elements decay spontaneously . . ." and then walked over to the center of the circle, where there was a round indentation, three feet deep and five across. The inner surface was glazed and smooth. It was shaped like an inverted cone and looked as if it had been caused by the boss of an enormous spinning top. "This is where the space-craft landed?"

Kandinski nodded. He filled the last tube and then stowed the rack away in a canvas satchel. He came over to Ward and stared down at the hole. "What does it look like to you? A meteor impact? Or an oil drill, perhaps?" A smile showed behind his dusty beard. "The F-109's at the Air Force Weapons School begin their target runs across here. It might have been caused by a rogue cannon shell."

Ward stooped down and felt the surface of the pit, running his fingers thoughtfully over the warm fused silica. "More like a 500-pound bomb. But the cone is geometrically perfect. It's certainly unusual."

"Unusual?" Kandinski chuckled to himself and picked up the satchel.

"Has anyone else been out here?" Ward asked as they trudged up the slope.

"Two so-called experts." Kandinski slapped the sand off his knees. "A geologist from Gulf-Vacuum and an Air Force Ballistics officer. You'll be glad to hear that they both thought I had dug the pit myself and then fused the surface with an acetylene torch." He peered critically at Ward. "Why did you come out here today?"

"Idle curiosity," Ward said. "I had an afternoon off and I felt like a drive."

THEY reached the crest of the hill and he stopped and looked down into the basin. The lines of string split the circle into a strange horological device, a huge zodiacal mandala, the dark patches in the arcs Kandinski had been working telling its stations.

"You were going to tell me why you came out here," Kandinski said as they walked back to the car.

Ward shrugged. "I suppose I wanted to prove something to myself. There's a problem of reconciliation. He hesitated, and then began: "You see, there are some things which are self-evidently false. The laws of common

sense and every day experience refute them. I know a lot of the evidence for many things we believe is pretty thin, but I don't have to embark on a theory of knowledge to decide that the Moon isn't made of green cheese."

"Well?" Kandinski shifted the satchel to his other shoulder.

"This Venusian you've seen," Ward said. "The landing, the runic tablet. I can't believe them. Every piece of evidence I've seen, all the circumstantial details, the facts given in this book . . . they're all patently false." He turned to one of the middle chapters. "Take this at random—'A phosphorescent green fluid pulsed through the dorsal lung-chamber of the Prime's helmet, inflating two opaque fan-like gills . . .'" Ward closed the book and shrugged helplessly. Kandinski stood a few feet away from him, the sunlight breaking across the deep lines of his face.

"Now I know what you say to my objections," Ward went on. "If you told a 19th century chemist that lead could be transmuted into gold he would have dismissed you as a mediaevalist. But the point is that he'd have been right to do so—"

"I understand," Kandinski interrupted. "But you still haven't explained why you came out here today."

Ward stared out over the des-

ert. High above, a strato-jet was doing Cuban eights into the sun, the spiral vapor trails drifting across the sky like gigantic fragments of an apocalyptic message. Looking around, he realized that Kandinski must have walked from the bus-stop on the highway. "I'll give you a lift back," he said.

As they drove along the canal he turned to Kandinski. "I enjoyed your lecture last night. I apologize for trying to make you look a fool."

Kandinski was loosening his boot-straps. He laughed unrepentantly. "You put me in an awkward position. I could hardly have challenged you. I can't afford to subscribe to every astronomical journal. Though a sixth moon would have been big news." As they neared Vernon Gardens he asked: "Would you like to come in and look at the tablet analysis?"

Ward made no reply to the invitation. He drove around the square and parked under the trees, then looked up at the fountains, tapping his fingers on the wind-shield. Kandinski sat beside him, cogitating into his beard.

Ward watched him carefully. "Do you think this Venusian will return?"

Kandinski nodded. "Yes. I am sure he will."

LATER they sat together at a broad roll-top desk in the room above the Tycho. Around the wall hung white cardboard screens packed with lines of cuneiform glyphs and Kandinski's progressive breakdown of their meaning.

Ward held an enlargement of the original photograph of the Venusian tablet and listened to Kandinski's explanation.

"As you see from this," Kandinski explained, "in all probability there are not millions of Venusians, as everyone would expect, but only three or four of them altogether. Two are circling Venus, a third Uranus and possibly a fourth is in orbit around Neptune. This solves the difficulty that puzzled you and antagonizes everyone else. Why should the Prime have approached only one person out of several hundred million and selected him on a completely random basis? Now obviously he had seen the Russian and American satellite capsules and assumed that our race, like his own, numbered no more than three or four, then concluded from the atmospheric H-bomb tests that we were in conflict and would soon destroy ourselves. This is one of the reasons why I think he will return shortly and why it is important to organize a world-wide reception for him on a governmental level."

"Wait a minute," Ward said. "He must have known that the population of this planet numbered more than three or four. Even the weakest telescope would demonstrate that."

"Of course, but he would naturally assume that the millions of inhabitants of the Earth belonged to an aboriginal sub-species, perhaps employed as work animals. After all, if he observed that despite this planet's immense resources the bulk of its population lived like animals an alien visitor could only decide that they were considered as such."

"But space vehicles are supposed to have been observing us since the Babylonian era, long before the development of satellite rockets. There have been thousands of recorded sightings."

Kandinski shook his head. "None of them has been authenticated."

"What about the other landings that have been reported recently?" Ward asked. "Any number of people have seen Venusians and Martians."

"Have they?" Kandinski asked sceptically. "I wish I could believe that. Some of the encounters reveal marvelous powers of invention, but no one can accept them as anything but fantasy."

"The same criticism has been levelled at your space-craft," Ward reminded him.

Kandinski seemed to lose pa-

tience. "I saw it," he exclaimed, impotently tossing his notebook on to the desk. "I spoke to the Prime!"

Ward nodded non-committally and picked up the photograph again. Kandinski stepped over to him and took it out of his hands. "Ward," he said carefully. "Believe me. You must. You know I am too big a man to waste myself on a senseless charade." His massive hands squeezed Ward's shoulders and almost lifted him off the seat. "Believe me. Together we can be ready for the next landings and alert the world. I am only Charles Kandinski, a waiter at a third-rate cafe, but you are Dr. Andrew Ward of Mount Vernon Observatory. They will listen to you. Try to realize what this may mean for mankind."

Ward pulled himself away from Kandinski and rubbed his shoulders.

"Ward, do you believe me? Ask yourself."

Ward looked up pensively at Kandinski towering over him, his red beard like the burning, unconsumed bush.

"I think so," he said quietly. "Yes, I do."

* * *

A WEEK later the 23rd Congress of the International Geophysical Association opened at Mount Vernon Observatory. At 3-30 p.m., in the Hoyle Li-

brary amphitheatre, Professor Renthall was to deliver the inaugural address welcoming the 92 delegates and 25 newspaper and agency reporters to the fortnight's program of lectures and discussions.

Shortly after 11 o'clock that morning Ward and Professor Cameron completed their final arrangements and escaped down to Vernon Gardens for an hour's relaxation.

"Well," Cameron said as the walked over to the Site Tycho, "I've got a pretty good idea of what it must be like to run the Waldorf-Astoria." They picked one of the sidewalk tables and sat down. "I haven't been here for weeks," Cameron said. "How are you getting on with the Man in the Moon?"

"Kandinski? I hardly ever see him," Ward said.

"I was talking to the Time Magazine stringer about Charles," Cameron said, cleaning his sunglasses. "He thought he might do a piece about him."

"Hasn't Kandinski suffered enough of that sort of thing?" Ward asked moodily.

"Perhaps he has," Cameron agreed. "Is he still working on his crossword puzzle? The tablet thing, whatever he calls it."

Casually, Ward said: "He has a theory that it should be possible to see the lunar bases. Refuelling points established there

by the Venusians over the centuries."

"Interesting," Cameron commented.

"They're sited near Copernicus," Ward went on. "I know Vandone at Milan is mapping Archimedes and the Imbrium. I thought I might mention it to him at his semester tomorrow."

Professor Cameron took off his glasses and gazed quizzically at Ward. "My dear Andrew, what has been going on? Don't tell me you've become one of Charles' converts?"

Ward laughed and shook his head. "Of course not. Obviously there are no lunar bases or alien space craft. I don't for a moment believe a word Kandinski says." He gestured helplessly. "At the same time I admit I have become involved with him. There's something about Kandinski's personality. On the one hand I can't take him seriously—"

"Oh, I take him seriously," Cameron cut in smoothly. "Very seriously indeed, if not quite in the sense you mean." Cameron turned his back on the sidewalk crowds. "Jung's views on flying saucers are very illuminating, Andrew, they'd help out to understand Kandinski. Jung believes that civilization now stands at the conclusion of a Platonic Great Year, at the eclipse of the sign of Pisces which has dominated the Christian epoch, and

that we are entering the sign of Aquarius, a period of confusion and psychic chaos. He remarks that throughout history, at all times of uncertainty and discord, cosmic space vehicles have been seen approaching Earth, and that in a few extreme cases actual meetings with their occupants are supposed to have taken place."

As Cameron paused, Ward glanced across the tables for Kandinski, but a relief waiter served them and he assumed it was Kandinski's day off.

Cameron continued: "Most people regard Charles Kandinski as a lunatic, but as a matter of fact he is performing one of the most important roles in the world today, the role of a prophet alerting people to this coming crisis. The real significance of his fantasies, like that of the ban-the-bomb movements, is to be found elsewhere than on the conscious plane, as an expression of the immense psychic forces stirring below the surface of rational life, like the isotactic movements of the continental tables which heralded the major geological transformations."

Ward shook his head dubiously. "I can accept that a man such as Freud was a prophet, but Charles Kandinski—?"

"Certainly. Far more than Freud. It's unfortunate for Kan-

dinski, and for the writers of science fiction for that matter, that they have to perform their task of describing the symbols of transformation in a so-called rationalist society, where a scientific, or at least a pseudo-scientific explanation is required *a priori*. And because the true prophet never deals in what may be rationally deduced people such as Charles are ignored or derided today."

"It's interesting that Kandinski compared his meeting with the Venusian with Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus," Ward said.

"He was quite right. In both encounters you see the same mechanism of blinding unconscious revelation. And you can see too that Charles feels the same overwhelming need to spread the Pauline revelation to the world. The Anti-Apollo movement is only now getting under way, but within the next decade it will recruit millions, and men such as Charles Kandinski will be the fathers of its apocalypse."

"You make him sound a titanic figure," Ward remarked quietly. "I think he's just a lonely tired man obsessed by something he can't understand. Perhaps he simply needs a few friends to confide in."

Slowly shaking his head, Cameron tapped the table with his glasses. "Be warned, Andrew,

you'll burn your fingers if you play with Charles' brand of fire. The mana-personalities of history have no time for personal loyalties—the founder of the Christian church made that pretty plain."

SHORTLY after seven o'clock that evening Charles Kandinski mounted his bicycle and set off out of Vernon Gardens. The small room in the seedy area where he lived always depressed him on his free days from the Tycho, and as he pedalled along he ignored the shouts from his neighbors sitting out on their balconies with their crates of beer. He knew that his beard and the high ancient bicycle with its capacious wicker basket made him a grotesque, Quixotic figure, but he felt too pre-occupied to care. That morning he had heard that the French translation of 'The Landings from Outer Space', printed at his own cost, had been completely ignored by the Paris press. In addition a jobbing printer in Santa Vera was pressing him for payment for 5,000 anti-Apollo leaflets that had been distributed the previous year.

Above all had come the news on the radio that the target date of the first manned Moon-flight had been advanced to 1965, and on the following day would take

place the latest and most ambitious of the instrumented lunar flights. The anticipated budget for the Apollo program (in a moment of grim humor he had calculated that it would pay for the printing of some 1000 billion leaflets) seemed to double each year, but so far he had found little success in his attempt to alert people to the folly of venturing into space. All that day he had felt sick with frustration and anger.

At the end of the avenue he turned on to the highway which served the asparagus farms lying in the 20-mile strip between Vernon Gardens and the desert. It was a hot empty evening and few cars or trucks passed him. On either side of the road the great lemon-green terraces of asparagus lay seeping in their moist paddy beds, and occasionally a marsh-hen clacked overhead and dived out of sight.

Five miles along the road he reached the last farm-house above the edge of the desert. He cycled on to where the road ended 200 yards ahead, dismounted and left the bicycle in a culvert. Slinging his camera over one shoulder, he walked off across the hard ground into the mouth of a small valley.

The boundary between the desert and the farm-strip was irregular. On his left, beyond the rocky slopes, he could hear a motor-reaper purring down one

of the mile-long spits of fertile land running into the desert, but the barren terrain and the sense of isolation began to relax him and he forgot the irritations that had plagued him all day.

A keen naturalist, he saw a long-necked sand-crane perched on a spur of shale fifty feet from him and stopped and raised his camera. Peering through the finder he noticed that the light had faded too deeply for a photograph. Curiously, the sand-crane was clearly silhouetted against a circular glow of light which emanated from beyond a low ridge at the end of the valley. This apparently sourceless corona fitfully illuminated the darkening air, as if coming from a lighted mine-shaft.

Putting away his camera, Kandinski walked forward, within a few minutes reached the ridge and began to climb it. The face sloped steeply, and he pulled himself up by the hefts of brush and scrub, kicking away footholds in the rocky surface.

JUST before he reached the crest he felt his heart surge painfully with the exertion, and he lay still for a moment, a sudden feeling of dizziness spinning in his head. He waited until the spasm subsided, shivering faintly in the cool air, an unfamiliar undertone of uneasiness in his mind. The air seemed to vibrate

strangely with an intense inaudible music that pressed upon his temples. Rubbing his forehead, he lifted himself over the crest.

The ridge he had climbed was U-shaped and about 200 feet across, its open end away from him. Resting on the sandy floor in its center was an enormous metal disc, over 100 feet in diameter and 30 feet high. It seemed to be balanced on a huge conical boss, half of which had already sunk into the sand. A fluted rim ran around the edge of the disc and separated the upper and lower curvatures, which were revolving rapidly in opposite directions, throwing off magnificent flashes of silver light.

Kandinski lay still, as his first feelings of fear retreated and his courage and presence of mind returned. The inaudible piercing music had faded, and his mind felt brilliantly clear. His eyes ran rapidly over the space-ship, and he estimated that it was over twice the size of the craft he had seen three years earlier. There were no markings or ports on the carapace, but he was certain it had not come from Venus.

Kandinski lay watching the space-craft for ten minutes, trying to decide upon his best course of action. Unfortunately he had smashed the lens of his camera. Finally, pushing himself backwards, he slid slowly down the slope. When he reached the floor

he could still hear the whine of the rotors. Hiding in the pools of shadow, he made his way up the valley, and two hundred yards from the ridge he broke into a run.

He returned the way he had come, his great legs carrying him across the ruts and boulders, seized his bicycle from the culvert and pedalled rapidly towards the farmhouse.

A single light shone in an upstairs room and he pressed one hand to the bell and pounded on the screen door with the other, nearly tearing it from its hinges. Eventually a young woman appeared. She came down the stairs reluctantly, uncertain what to make of Kandinski's beard and ragged dusty clothes.

"Telephone!" Kandinski belatedly at her, gasping wildly as he caught back his breath.

The girl at last unlatched the door and backed away from him nervously. Kandinski lurched past her and staggered blindly around the darkened hall. "Where is it?" he roared.

The girl switched on the lights and pointed into the sitting room. Kandinski pushed past her and rushed over to it.

WARD played with his brandy glass and discreetly loosened the collar of his dress shirt, listening to Dr. MacIntyre of Greenwich Observatory, four

seats away on his right, make the third of the after-dinner speeches. Ward was to speak next, and he ran through the opening phrases of his speech, glancing down occasionally to con his notes. At 34 he was the youngest member to address the Congress banquet, and by no means unimpressed by the honor. He looked at the venerable figures to his left and right on the top table, their black jackets and white shirt fronts reflected in the table silver, and saw Professor Cameron wink at him reassuringly.

He was going through his notes for the last time when a steward bent over his shoulder. "Telephone for you, Dr. Ward."

"I can't take it now," Ward whispered. "Tell them to call later."

"The caller said it was extremely urgent, Doctor. Something about some people from the Neptune arriving."

"The Neptune?"

"I think that's a hotel in Santa Vera. Maybe the Russian delegates have turned up after all."

Ward pushed his chair back, made his apologies and slipped away.

Professor Cameron was waiting in the alcove outside the banquetting hall when Ward stepped out of the booth. "Anything the trouble, Andrew? It's not your father, I hope—"

"It's Kandinski," Ward said

hurriedly. "He's out in the desert, near the farm-strip. He says he's seen another space vehicle."

"Oh, is that all." Cameron shook his head. "Come on, we'd better get back. The poor fool!"

"Hold on," Ward said. "He's got it under observation now. It's on the ground. He told me to call General Wayne at the air base and alert the Strategic Air Command." Ward chewed his lip. "I don't know what to do."

Cameron took him by the arm. "Andrew, come on. MacIntyre's winding up."

"What can we do, though?" Ward asked. "He seemed all right, but then he said that he thought they were hostile. That sounds a little sinister."

"Andrew!" Cameron snapped. "What's the matter with you? Leave Kandinski to himself. You can't go now. It would be unpardonable rudeness."

"I've got to help Kandinski," Ward insisted. "I'm sure he needs it this time." He wrenched himself away from Cameron.

"Ward!" Professor Cameron called. "For God's sake, come back!" He followed Ward out on to the balcony and watched him run down the steps and disappear across the lawn into the darkness.

AS the wheels of the car thudded over the deep ruts, Ward cut the headlights and searched

the dark hills which marked the desert's edge. The warm glitter of Vernon Gardens lay behind him and only a few isolated lights shone in the darkness on either side of the road. He passed the farmhouse from which he assumed Kandinski had telephoned, then drove on slowly until he saw the bicycle Kandinski had left for him.

It took him several minutes to mount the huge machine, his feet well clear of the pedals for most of their stroke. Laboriously he covered a hundred yards, and after careening helplessly into a clump of scrub was forced to dismount and continue on foot.

Kandinski had told him that the ridge was about a mile up the valley. It was almost night and the starlight reflected off the hills lit the valley with fleeting vivid colors. He ran on heavily, the only sounds he could hear those of a thresher rattling like a giant metal insect half a mile behind him. Filling his lungs, he pushed on across the last hundred yards.

Kandinski was still lying on the edge of the ridge, watching the space-ship and waiting impatiently for Ward. Below him in the hollow. The upper and lower rotor sections swung around more slowly, at about one revolution per second. The space-ship had sunk a further ten feet into the desert floor and he was now

on the same level as the observation dome. A single finger of light poked out into the darkness, circling the ridge walls in jerky sweeps.

Then out of the valley behind him he saw someone stumbling along towards the ridge at a broken run. Suddenly a feeling of triumph and exhilaration came over him, and he knew that at last he had his witness.

Ward climbed up the slope to where he could see Kandinski. Twice he lost his grip and slithered downwards helplessly, tearing his hands on the gritty surface. Kandinski was lying flat on his chest, his head just above the ridge. Covered by the dust, he was barely distinguishable from the slope itself.

"Are you all right?" Ward whispered. He pulled off his bow tie and ripped open his collar. When he had controlled his breathing he crawled up besides Kandinski.

"Where?" he asked.

Kandinski pointed down into the hollow.

Ward raised his head, levering himself up on his elbows. For a few seconds he peered out into the darkness, and then drew his head back.

"You see it?" Kandinski whispered. His voice was short and labored. When Ward hesitated before replying he suddenly seized Ward's wrist in a vice-

like grip. In the faint light reflected by the white dust on the ridge Ward could see plainly his bright inflamed eyes.

"Ward! Can you see it?"

Ward nodded. "Yes," he said. "Yes, I see it."

Kandinski's powerful fingers remained clamped to his wrist as he lay beside Kandinski and gazed down into the darkness.

BELOW the compartment window one of Ward's fellow passengers was being seen off by a group of friends, and the young women in bright hats and bandanas and the men in slacks and beach sandals made him feel that he was leaving a sea-side resort at the end of a holiday. From the window he could see the observatory domes of Mount Vernon rising out of the trees, and he identified the white brick-work of the Hoyle Library a thousand feet below the summit. Edna Cameron had brought him to the station, but he had asked her not to come on to the platform and she had said goodbye and driven off. Cameron himself he had seen only once, when he had collected his books from the Institute.

Trying to forget it all, Ward noted thankfully that the train would leave within five minutes. He took his bank-book out of his wallet and counted the last week's withdrawals. He winced

at the largest item, 600 dollars which he had transferred to Kandinski's account to pay for the cablegrams.

Deciding to buy something to read, he left the car and walked back to the newsstand. Several of the magazines contained what could only be described as discouraging articles about himself, and he chose two or three newspapers.

Just then someone put a hand on his shoulder. He turned and saw Kandinski.

"Are you leaving?" Kandinski asked quietly. He had trimmed his beard so that only a pale vestige of the original bloom remained, revealing his high bony cheekbones. His face seemed almost fifteen years younger, thinner and more drawn, but at the same time composed, like that of a man recovering slowly from the attack of some chronic fever.

"I'm sorry, Charles," Ward said as they walked back to the car. "I should have said goodbye to you but I thought I'd better not."

Kandinski's expression was subdued but puzzled. "Why?" he asked. "I don't understand."

Ward shrugged. "I'm afraid everything here has more or less come to an end for me, Charles. I'm going back to Princeton until the spring. Freshman physics." He smiled ruefully at himself. "Boyle's Law, Young's Mod-

ulus, getting right back to fundamentals. Not a bad idea, perhaps."

"But why are you leaving?" Kandinski pressed.

"Well, Cameron thought it might be tactful of me to leave. After our statement to the Secretary-General was published in *The New York Times* I became very much *persona non grata* at the Hubble. The trustees were on to Professor Renthall again this morning."

Kandinski smiled and seemed relieved. "What does the Hubble matter?" he scoffed. "We have more important work to do. You know, Ward, when Mrs. Cameron told me just now that you were leaving I couldn't believe it."

"I'm sorry, Charles, but it's true."

"Ward," Kandinski insisted. "You can't leave. The Primes will be returning soon. We must prepare for them."

"I know, Charles, and I wish I could stay." They reached the car and Ward put his hand out. "Thanks for coming to see me off."

Kandinski held his hand tightly. "Andrew, tell me the truth.

Are you afraid of what people will think of you? Is that why you want to leave? Haven't you enough courage and faith in yourself?"

"Perhaps that's it," Ward conceded, wishing the train would start. He reached for the rail and began to climb into the car but Kandinski held him.

"Ward, you can't drop your responsibilities like this!"

"Please, Charles," Ward said, feeling his temper rising. He pulled his hand away but Kandinski seized him by the shoulder and almost dragged him off the car.

Ward wrenched himself away. "Leave me alone!" he snapped fiercely. "I saw your space-ship, didn't I?"

Kandinski watched him go, a hand picking at his vanished beard, completely perplexed.

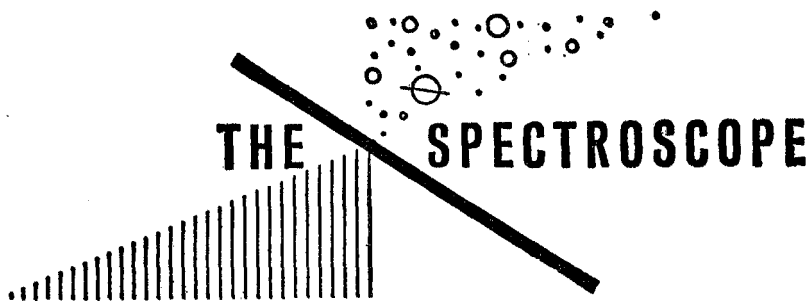
Whistles sounded, and the train began to edge forward.

"Goodbye, Charles," Ward called down. "Let me know if you see anything else."

He went into the car and took his seat. Only when the train was twenty miles from Mount Vernon did he look out of the window.

THE END

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By S. E. COTTIS

The Dreaming Earth. By John Brunner. 159 pp. Pyramid Books. Paper: 40¢.

The setting for John Brunner's latest book is the United States in the 21st century; which, in Brunner's conception, is not the ideal place we might hope it. The term "population explosion" has moved from the realm of theoretical argument between birth-control advocates and food production experts to become a grim reality. The UN has been called in to develop new sources of vital material, as well as helping with the many other headaches that are natural accompaniments of tense times. Unfortunately, this action is tantamount to "closing the barn door after the horse is out," because by the time the UN is put in control, the situation is out of hand. Therefore, in addition to the practical problems involved, the UN finds itself the focal point for all the frustrations and

jitters of a populace worn to the breaking point. Then, as if the over-burdened organization did not have enough to contend with, a problem of even vaster proportions is disclosed. Law enforcement officials had been aware for some time that thousands of people were using a strange new drug, "happy dreams," but the extent of the addiction wasn't clear until all the users started vanishing. How the drug was made or distributed was a complete mystery, for where, in a country whose industry was now under such strict and constant scrutiny, could such a large-scale operation be concealed?

Unfortunately for the reader, the answer to this question (and to the other major crises in the story) is very obvious long before Mr. Brunner reveals it. This weakness in plotting is somewhat softened by the fact that Mr. Brunner is far from the

novice level in most other respects—characters, prose style, etc. All of which means that the book is action-packed, be it anticlimactic or not.

Analog 1. Edited by John W. Campbell. 219 pp. Doubleday & Company, Inc. \$395.

In his latest anthology, John Campbell has collected eight stories from *Analog* and prefaced them with what will undoubtedly prove to be one of the most controversial introductions of the year. Most writers on science fiction, even the most avid, have claimed for science fiction a very unique and special niche within the whole literary spectrum. Mr. Campbell boldly rushes into his opening essay by adopting the opposite view: that the whole body of "mainstream" literature is actually a subgroup of the field of science fiction, because "science fiction deals with all places in the Universe and all times in Eternity," not merely the here-and-now. Perhaps one might be more inclined to accept this upside-down attitude as a bit of whimsy, or as a sign of a man's justifiable pride in his work, if Mr. Campbell did not dismiss all the rest of literature in such a perfunctory manner.

In doing so he makes two very dangerous generalizations. First, he claims that science fiction is more difficult to write and

puts more demands on the author than the conventional story. I dispute this strongly. It takes far greater skill and imagination to transmute the conventional subject into the magic of great fiction. With an unconventional subject, the novelty of the idea is often strong enough to carry along less-than-skillful treatment.

Secondly, Mr. Campbell blithely tells us that in the limited confines of modern, mainstream literature it isn't considered necessary to suggest that human beings have really powerful emotions, not merely petty worries such as who's sleeping with who's wife. An absurd statement like that has a wealth of replies. I'll confine myself to saying that who's sleeping with who's wife can be either powerful or petty depending on the people involved, the psychological factors, the prose style, the writer's underlying philosophy, etc., etc. In addition, I would be happy to furnish Mr. Campbell with a reading list of great modern works on other topics.

Perhaps the weakest link in his argument lies in his use of the term "mainstream literature." He seems to mean it in the sense of popular literature. But *great* literature (the primary source of that powerful writing he is seeking) is very frequently *not* mainstream or

popular literature. Indeed, this great literature is often critical of, rather than a reflection of, the values and mores of its times. A look at the lives of some of the great writers (or artists or philosophers) will show that their greatness today is often in inverse proportion to their popularity in their own time. So Mr. Campbell really has no valid case at all, since it is both incomplete and illogical to compare the whole of one body of literature (science fiction) with only part of another (mainstream).

As a starting point for discussion, Mr. Campbell serves a useful function, I suppose, but the tone he adopts makes it hard to dismiss the notion that it was written out of his own personal bitterness with our society and culture.

As for the collection of stories, *Analog* I may read all right by itself, but it cannot stand up to any one of the *Galaxy* or *F and SF* anthologies picked at random. Seen as a group, four of the eight are extremely sketchy with very little happening, and only two could really qualify for the "mind-stretching" character the editor claims for them. In addition, there is a marked similarity in language and prose style among many of the stories. Since they are all by different authors, and since I don't think this is a case of Sturgeon's hive-

mind at work, I must assume that this sameness came about through the editing (or over-editing?) in much the same way that *Time* and *Newsweek* have the unfortunate habit of reducing each writer's individuality to a common mash.

Briefly, the stories are as follows:

"Monument," by Lloyd Biggle, Jr., shows how one man's foresight saves a beautiful planet from exploitation through ingenious use of law. (This is in contrast to Mr. Simak's use of the law to destroy rather than save, in his novel reviewed here last month.)

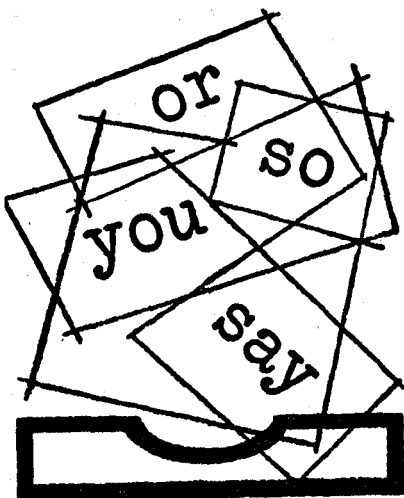
"The Plague," by Teddy Keller, is one of the flimsy ones, too obvious to be comic, yet not slapstick, either.

"Remember the Alamo," by T. R. Fehrenbach, is a thought-provoker, in spite of clumsy writing. A time traveler wants to participate in the events at the Alamo, but in spite of his efforts, he cannot stop happening a different history from the one he knows to be true.

Christopher Anvil's "The Hunch" presents an Abott-and-Costello-type situation comedy which happens to take place in a space ship.

"Barnacle Bull," by Winston Saunders, is the most technically-oriented of the lot. It details

(Continued on page 127)



Dear Miss Goldsmith:

It has been 18 years since I've read a copy of *AMAZING STORIES*. Your writer Roger Zelazny is an *unmistakeable* literary genius. As good or even better than B. Traven. I enjoyed him very much.

Robert Frith
Reseda
California

● *So look what you've been missing for all that time.*

Dear Editor:

One of the best stories in your February issue, I think, was the Sharkey piece, "The Smart Ones." I am accustomed to seeing and enjoying Sharkey's work in *FANTASTIC*, but I didn't think I'd see him in *AMAZING*.

The theme of the story was familiar, but it had a refreshingly unique conclusion. I en-

joyed the thing entirely, and though I am not one of these people who considers this type of thing essential, I did notice that the thing was completely implausible, as far as science goes.

Mutations themselves are in 99% of the instances, unfavorable. The fact that the new species would probably be sterile, and therefore of no use, is another point. But the chance that the mutation, as stated in this story, would not only produce *h o m o s u p e r i e u r* (the 15 month old reasoning child) but favor this creature with characteristics perfectly suited to the new environment (rock-eating) is much too much to swallow all in one story. And to think that this all occurred without the aid of evolution. In spite of this, it was a well-written story. The moral studies and reactions of the people were credible and well-thought out.

Another reason I enjoyed the story was that by the very nature of our society we have virtually halted evolution and made it very hard for *homo superior*, if he should develop (which at the present is unlikely) to pop up his head and say "Here I am!" Therefore, perhaps mutations will be the ultimate cause for the continuance of evolution. Just the same, it seems to me that this is leaving a great deal

to chance and the chances of what happened in "Smart Ones" coming true in such a situation (or something similar) are practically nil. So much for the discussion on germplasm.

The Moskowitz Profile was, as usual, excellent. I especially enjoyed it because Arthur C. Clarke happens to be one of my favorite writers.

"Recovery Area," by Daniel Galouye, is the second encounter that I've had with the author, the first being his superb *Dark Universe*. And this story increases my admiration. It truly was, a classic. I hope you'll be able to persuade Mr. Galouye to write additional material for AMAZING.

Galouye's fabulous story was great enough to make the issue complete in itself, but the Sharkey story added to it. The other stories were average.

David T. Keil
38 Slocum Crescent
Forest Hills 75, N.Y.

● *Do you believe in telepathy? Because we have a Galouye novelet (cover story) coming up in the August issue along with the Sharkey novel in this one.*

Dear Editor:

Compliments are again due on your most recent issue of AMAZING, March. You proved to me beyond doubt that you can put

out an issue of all Class A stories without sticking in a reprint.

Every illustration but one was good—even Schelling, who has been putting out a volume of slop lately, it seems (but I'm sure this was just a phase—his covers were superb) did a good job.

The stories: I particularly liked Fyfe's "Star Chamber"—definitely better than his average. "Chocky," "The Borgia Hand," and "The Walls" were all just the kind of stories I like to read in AMAZING—"The Walls" was particularly good, exceptional, really a sort of horror story. Yet the manner in which Laumer presented it was so dignified and true-to-life in fashion that it seemed just exactly as real and possible as any true story.

J. G. Ballard (my favorite English writer) never lets me down with a story. His are all good. And I don't believe I've ever read one by him that really seemed too fantastic or illogical to happen some time in the future. No matter how wild an idea or setting is he presents it in a manner which makes it seem entirely logical and possible, plausible.

Of the two remaining stories of the issue, Hamilton's story was very good, and presented in a manner for which I have long admired him. But Young's story,

"Jupiter Found"—really now. I don't object to an idea being a bit trite, if presentation is fresh or some other points are in its favor, but this story, (underneath the generally good Young style) was downright silly. 8M-Adam and EV-Eve! It wouldn't have been so bad if he had given a bit more camouflage to his symbols.

Bob Adolfsen
9 Prospect Ave.
Sea Cliff, N.Y.

● *Perhaps you're right, but you ought to see all the stories we reject that try to explain the 8M and EV myth.*

Dear Editor:

I have just finished reading the February AMAZING and was much impressed by Daniel Galouye's "Recovery Area." It is a pity that the picture of Venus presented here will almost inevitably become outdated in a few years—although the ideas in the story will remain fresh. In fact, if it is read by enough fans, "Recovery Area" could become a prime contender for Hugo honors next year.

I was particularly interested in the profile of Arthur C. Clarke, which I had been looking forward to for some time. On the whole, it was quite good. Mr. Moskowitz does well in his profiles in not refraining from criticizing the various authors when

he deems criticism to be warranted. However, I should like to mention a few points myself, such as Mr. Moskowitz' reference to Clarke's lack of ability as a "literary technician." Possibly I have misunderstood the use of this term, but it should be noted that Clarke's writing is distinguished, among other things, by its near-flawless prose and that his particular style has drawn high praise from many varied sources, both in and out of the science fiction world. It is certainly different from that of other sf writers, but is in no way inferior—in fact, I would rate it among the very best.

I also think more detailed attention should have been paid in the profile to some of Clarke's novels, such as "The Sands of Mars" (which was "covered" in two short sentences) and "The City and the Stars." The latter is marked by its great sweep, its fine, at times almost poetic, language, (how can Mr. Moskowitz possibly call this "anachronistic" or "outclassed"?) its quantity of fresh ideas, and above all its "sense of wonder" (as I believe it is called)—all of which go to make "The City and the Stars" one of the best science fiction stories ever written.

More space might have been given to Clarke's short stories, which cover a wide range of themes. Stories like "Time's Ar-

row," "Breaking Strain," and "Nemesis" might have been examined. No mention was made of the "Tales from the White Hart."

With regard to your magazine generally: please keep the profiles and those realistic covers by Alex Schomburg, but only run serials and "classic reprints" if they are of exceptional quality. Let's have more in the way of time travel (as in that great April, 1962 issue) and more stories like "I-C-a-Bem," by Jack Vance (October, 1961), "Third Stage," by Poul Anderson (February, 1962), and Ben Bova's "Answer, Please Answer" (October, 1962). With gems such as these AMAZING should be in a position to start bringing out a yearly (?) anthology.

Angus Taylor
Cartwright's Point
Kingston, Ontario

● *We have novelets by Bob Young and Roger Zelazny coming up that will fall in the category you mention.*

Dear Editor:

Hol' on! Hol' on! Hol' on! Your controversy on ERB and OAK was mildly amusing at first, since I read both with mild pleasure, but Friend Turner in the Feb. issue stomps on the toes of a better writer than either: Robert E. Howard.

Actually, of course, the whole thing is a semantic argument—

what is meant by a "better" writer. According to a logical definition the best writer is the one that gives the most pleasure. I get more pleasure from Steinbeck than Hemingway; more pleasure from Hemingway than Faulkner, and more pleasure from Faulkner than Joyce . . . and more pleasure from Heinlein than any of them. So which one is the *best* writer? And Who Cares?

David L. Travis
P.O. Box 191
Glassboro, N. J.

● *Well, the writers care. And editors. Your point, though well-taken, omits one other difficulty: a man may be a "better" writer in one of his stories, and a "worse" writer in another.*

Dear Editor:

Ben Bova's article in the March issue was, as usual, competently and informatively constructed, with as much care devoted to quality of writing as reliability of fact. But I'd like to add my quibble to just one specific point he brings up; that of communication among creatures as an indication of intelligence. According to Mr. Bova, a race of beings capable of communicating and exchanging information among themselves would be considered to be intelligent. This I find to be a perfectly valid and acceptable statement, though one

... OR SO YOU SAY

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which implies that communication between entities is a necessary prerequisite before a being can be considered intelligent.

To me, this does not necessarily seem to be an iron-clad rule. Postulate a single being, created through a freak of nature and probability, the only one of its kind (as many sf writers have done). A creature of this sort, unhindered by the limitations imposed on flesh-and-blood such as we, could rely on energy for its nourishment and life, existing in an abstract state in the ether, and absorbing solar radiation to prolong its existence. A creature of this sort would be entirely self-sufficient, possessed of neither the ability to communicate with other races, nor the need to do so. Living a nearly immortal existence, it could travel limitless distance, absorb emanations from a million different suns, observe and study a thousand diverse cultures living on worlds ranging from cold, dead asteroids, to planets teeming with life, such as Earth. This being would undoubtedly have a measure of intelligence, in order to seek out the proper source of nourishment, and derive a sense of entertainment from the actions of other alien races. Yet true and complete self-sufficiency, and equally intense satisfaction at the attainment of this level,

would completely negate the desire for communication. I am not referring to an elaborate plant, or an equally mindless entity in which survival is reduced to the level of a tropism, but a creature that by the standards proposed by scientists, would be considered truly intelligent, even though it would totally differ from humanity's concept of what constitutes intelligent life as we know it. Acceptable, Mr. Bova?

It's encouraging to see the British faction of sf writers so ably represented in the current issue, in the presences of Mr. Wyndham and Mr. Ballard. You seem to be grooming a staff of regulars, and while I never regarded the practice as quite cricket, when exercised by an editor, contending that this innovation tends to drive away any new blood, it insures a steady crop of fine stories nonetheless. Keith Laumer has proven his value many times previously. Much as I disliked "A Trace of Memory," for the generally poor writing and the unadroit manner in which the theme was mishandled, I have a great respect for Laumer's talents, and he's satisfied me too many times to let one clinker alter my opinion. Roger Zelazny has a knack with the outré and weird that could well transform him into a major fantasy writer some day. Jack Sharkey has such a talent too, but thus far all I've

seen him do is waste it on characters spouting brash dialogue and becoming enmeshed in incredible situations. Hamilton, is of course, *the* veteran of the magazine, and is probably the most valuable addition to a staff of regulars.

Mike Deckinger
31 Carr Place
Fords, New Jersey

● *How can you accuse us of driving away new blood, and then mention Laumer, Sharkey, and Zelazney—all of whom we discovered and whose first sf stories appeared in our pages? For shame!*

Dear Editor:

As I am an ardent reader of science fiction and fantasy I never miss an issue of AMAZING or FANTASTIC. During the past few months I have been accumulating many comments on the various

issues, until I could no longer resist writing.

The general contents of your magazines are excellent; they are the finest examples in the field of imaginable fiction.

Raymond F. Jones, Marion Zimmer Bradley, and Keith Laumer have held the AMAZING fort in a superb fashion, as have Fritz Leiber and Robert F. Young for FANTASTIC. Edmond Hamilton is a tremendous boon to any magazine; everything he writes is a masterpiece. In corollation to the contents are the covers. Vernon Kramer has topped them all; his drawings are simply "out of this world." They seem to possess a peculiar three-dimensional quality. In my opinion he is the greatest cover artist since Schomburg.

Richard Evers
Star Rte. 2, Box 68
Shelton, Wash.

THE SPECTROSCOPE

(Continued from page 21)

a space ship's attempt to travel through the Asteroid Belt.

"Join Our Gang?" by Sterling Lanier, is another sketch really, which could have been stretched out without any sense of padding. It tells of the tension surrounding efforts of a delegation from the Sirian Combine to get a new planet to become a member.

"Sleight of Wit," by Gordon Dickson, is a really professional

job, by far the best of the group. It is an amusing tale of the rivalry between a man from Earth and an alien who both lay claim to a planet they discover simultaneously.

The last title, and a pun at that, is "Prologue to an Analogue," by Leigh Richmond. It is a strange story, illustrating the resistance that people have to the idea that they are powerful (at least collectively) and can work miracles.

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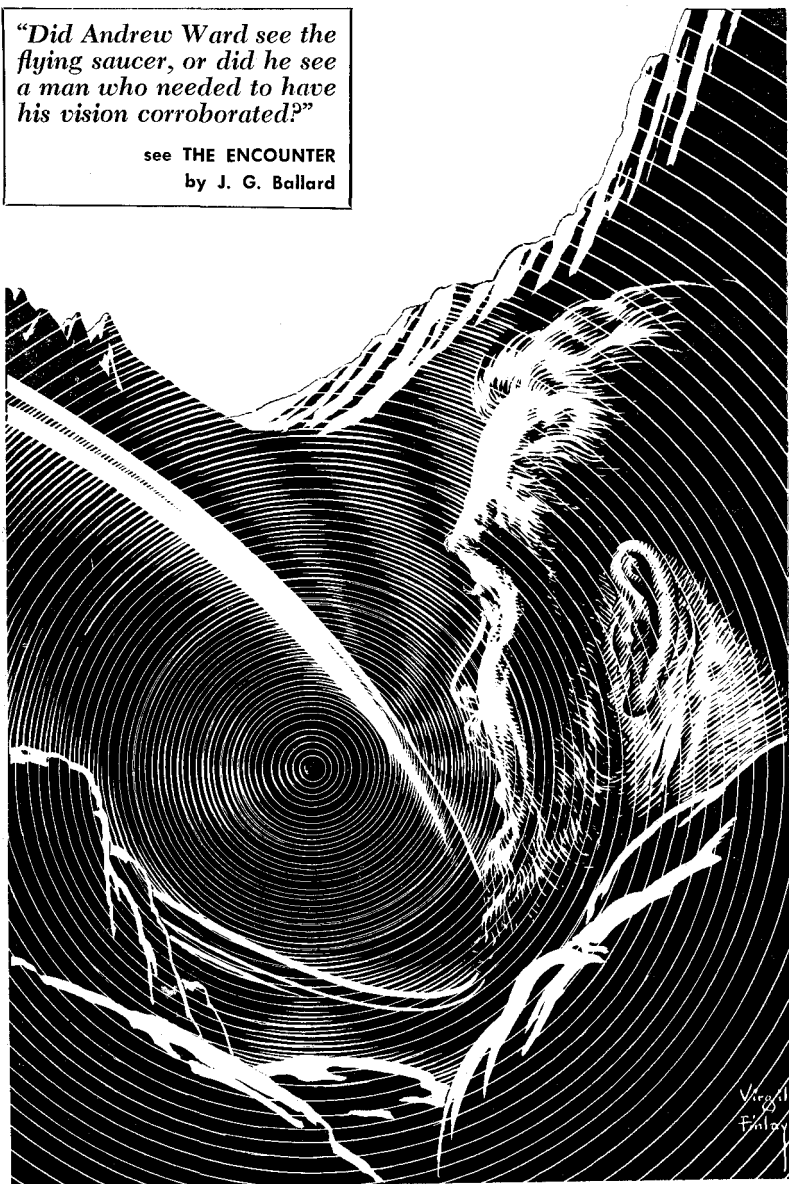
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